

PROGRESS



The new YMCA Community Center. It is hoped that the center will lead to a continued revitalization of downtown Watertown. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

YMCA IMPACT BEING FELT

By CRAIG FOX
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WATERTOWN — Local developer Jake Johnson is already seeing an impact from the YMCA's \$27.5 million community and aquatics center opening in downtown in December.

Johnson, who owns about 50,000 square feet of office and retail space under the Y's new facility at 146 Arsenal St., said unidentified tenants in the building's storefronts have already inquired about expanding their space as the result of the influx of people coming downtown after the community center opened.

Johnson, who owns about a dozen Public Square properties alone, says he's already seen "a lot of new activity" after the community center opened in a former call center and F.W. Woolworth store.

"It's a big deal," he said. Recently, the Y confirmed that it has signed up 3,000 new members since the community center opened its doors in early December. Memberships have jumped from about 8,200 at the old YMCA facility on Public Square to about 12,000 since the community center made its debut downtown.

That's a lot of people who might not be downtown otherwise, Johnson said. And downtown shops, restaurants and businesses will be the beneficiaries of the new downtown traffic, he added.

He also anticipates that vacant space in the former mini-mall below the Y community center will



The ribbon is cut, opening the Watertown YMCA's Community and Aquatics Center in downtown Watertown on Dec. 11. It is expected that the new center will bring more people to downtown Watertown on a consistent basis. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



See YMCA A2 The new YMCA Community Center. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times



The former YMCA building on Washington Street, is now up for sale, with Watertown developer Jake Johnson indicating he is interested in acquiring the property. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times



The six-lane lap pool inside the new YMCA Community Center. The center is expected to host large swim meets that will bring an influx of people to downtown Watertown. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

YMCA

From A1

eventually fill up with new tenants.

He's in the process of buying the former YMCA building and plans to convert it into an indoor golf facility to offer golfers a place to hone their playing skills during the entire year. He owns Ives Hill Country Club.

The Y's parking lot seems to be full most of the time, with members working out, swimming in the 6-lane pool and participating in a myriad of activities and programs. With its new amenities, the Y increased programming at the new state-of-the-art facility that was unable to offer in the old building.

The new Y features a natatorium with a lap pool and recreational pool in a 10,500-square-foot addition, a racquet center, indoor track, wellness center and child watch facilities.

The new facility is attracting people not only from Watertown but also from communities in the surrounding area, said Donald W. Rutherford, CEO of the Watertown Local Development Corporation, also known as the Watertown Trust.

Recently, he talked to a man from Syracuse who heard about the new Y and decided to drive up and use it.

"Every time I go to the Y, the parking lot is full," Rutherford said. "Getting people to come to downtown is exciting."

The new Y has already held its first major athletic event.

On Feb. 3-4, the Y's Blue Sharks youth swim team hosted CNY YMCA District Swimming Championship that brought in 400 swimmers and their families from outside the area to compete in the meet.

They ate restaurants,



Rows of cardio machines inside the new YMCA Community Center. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

stayed in hotels, bought gas and shopped in local businesses, Y Chief Executive Officer Shawna Cutuli said.

Without the new 6-lane pool, the Y was never able to host the regional swim meet before, she said.

Senior city planner Jennifer Voss also believes that the Y will have an impact on downtown, but it might be a little early to tell just how much.

Wait until the weather breaks, she said. That's when people will be more apt to walk to other areas of downtown to eat and shop, she said.

Now that they built it, people will come, Johnson said.

And the community, he said, should just be happy that downtown has such a "great" place its business district.



Spectators cheer on swim meet participants recently at the new YMCA complex in Watertown. It is expected that the ability to host such meets will help draw people into the downtown area. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

Keeping Healthcare Local: Carthage Area Hospital and Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center's Regional Collaboration

By **RICH DUVALL**

CEO, Carthage Area Hospital, Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center

As we look ahead to 2024, Carthage Area Hospital (CAH), Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center (CHMC), the North Country Orthopaedic Group (NCOG), and Meadowbrook Terrace Assisted Living Facility, united under the North Star Health Alliance (NSHA), are on the cusp of an exciting phase of change and development. This period is marked by our collective dedication to a shared mission: providing quality driven, patient centered healthcare right here in the North Country.

NORTH STAR HEALTH ALLIANCE

The NSHA embodies a collaborative partnership aimed at keeping healthcare accessible within the local communities of northern New York. NSHA's collective efforts are aimed at ensuring local hospitals achieve economic sustainability, while preserving their independence within the community. Working together, members of NSHA provide convenient access to healthcare services within the local community.

CRITICAL ACCESS TRANSITION

CHMC is making significant progress as we transition from a sole community hospital to a critical access hospital and a stand-alone behavioral health hospital. As we move forward, our plans include the creation of a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital along with a 10-bed observation unit. Additionally, our facilities will include a stand-alone specialized 40-bed inpatient behavioral health hospital

to deliver much needed services to individuals of all ages, including children, adolescents, and adults. A cornerstone of this initiative, the Elizabeth May Duvall Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health Unit, opened in April 2022, is the North Country's only facility for acute inpatient mental health care for children and adolescents, reflecting our dedication to meeting our community's specific healthcare needs.

NEW PROVIDERS

Despite our recent challenges navigating the cyber-attack and economic inflation, our organization continues to grow and enhance our services. We're thrilled to share the news of welcoming several new healthcare providers, expanding the scope of our healthcare services. Dr. David Harvey Antecol, MD, FACC, FAHA, FRCP(C), has become a valuable addition to our Claxton-Hepburn team, and Dr. Mirza M. Ashraf, MD, F.A.C.C, F.C.C, has joined the Carthage Area Hospital team. These highly regarded cardiologists bring extensive experience to benefit our community in the North Country region.

Furthermore, we are pleased to introduce Dr. Daniel Kyung as the new Medical Director of the Richard E. Winter Cancer Center. Dr. Kyung, a renowned oncologist, brings expertise in areas such as thoracic cancers, gastrointestinal cancers, genitourinary cancers, head and neck cancers, breast cancers, and blood cancers. His addition to our team reinforces our commitment to providing comprehensive and specialized care in

oncology.

SERVICE EXPANSION AND ACCREDITATION

We're excited to announce the opening of the new NCOG Wound Care Center in Watertown. Complementing the Rev. Thomas T. Patterson Wound Healing Center in Ogdensburg, this addition marks a key advancement in our wound care services throughout the North Country. The new center is equipped to treat various wounds related to diabetes, circulatory problems, and burns. Additionally, the Rev. Thomas T. Patterson Wound Healing Center has recently earned the distinction of being the only hyperbaric medicine program in the region accredited by the Undersea & Hyperbaric Medical Society. This recent reaccreditation serves as a testament to our dedication to healthcare excellence, even in challenging times.

Richard E. Winter (REW) Cancer Center recently announced its accreditation by the Commission on Cancer (CoC), a program of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), following a rigorous evaluation of its cancer care program. This recognition marks the Cancer Center as the only one in the region acknowledged for outstanding collaborative cancer care, earning a Center of Excellence designation. This accomplishment highlights the Center's commitment to excellence in cancer care.

Additionally, we are excited to embark on significant technological upgrades in both our imaging and cancer centers throughout all our hospitals. This initiative represents

our commitment to providing cutting-edge care and ensuring that our patients benefit from the latest advancements in medical technology.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move forward into 2024 and beyond, the communities in the North Country can have confidence in the unwavering commitment of Carthage Area Hospital, Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, and the North Country Orthopaedic Group, along with the North Star Health Alliance, to provide consistent and dedicated care. Whether it is a swift trip to the emergency room, the convenience of using our walk-in clinics or mobile units, support treatment at the Richard E. Winter Cancer Center, or spending time with family at Meadowbrook Terrace Assisted Living, our pledge is unchanging. We are committed to enhancing your life through compassionate, comprehensive healthcare, serving as your trusted neighborhood healthcare system.

We want to express our profound gratitude to our dedicated team – our employees, medical staff, foundation members, auxiliary team, and board of directors. Your unwavering commitment, along with the strong support from our community, is the driving force behind our ability to provide exceptional patient-centered healthcare services right here in your hometown.

Sincerely,
Richard A. Duvall
Chief Executive Officer
CAH & CHMC



Carl A. McLaughlin, recipient of the 70th Israel A. Shapiro Citizenship Award, speaks with Tim and Mariko Virkler at the annual award dinner Feb. 8. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

'Well-deserved' honor for Rotary's McLaughlin

Chamber presents 70th Shapiro award at packed event

By JONATHON WHEELER
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This story appeared in the February edition of NNY Business

WATERTOWN — In a packed room Feb. 8, Carl A. McLaughlin was honored with the 70th Israel A. Shapiro Citizenship Award.

The award is presented by the Greater Watertown-North Country Chamber of Commerce.

McLaughlin headed the Noon Rotary Club that organizes the annual Fourth of July Concert in Thompson Park and was an integral part of the event.

McLaughlin stepped up in 2017 when the Noon Rotary Club was asked to help organize the event.

"In 2017 when the Watertown Noon Rotary Club was asked to assist the City of Watertown in hosting the event for our community, Carl selflessly stepped forward to lead the way," a news release from the Chamber of Commerce states. "He has not only played a large role in organizing the event each year but has also led the



Carl A. McLaughlin, recipient of this year's Israel A. Shapiro Citizenship Award, speaks with Kathleen and Kevin Mastellon at the annual award dinner Thursday night in Watertown.

Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

fundraising efforts necessary to ensure its sustainability for years to come."

The winner of the Shapiro Award is chosen by a nomination committee made up of board members, past Shapiro

Award members and community members. Nominations for the award start in the fall.

Chamber President Kayla Jamieson said McLaughlin's award is "well-deserved."

"He exemplifies not only

Rotary's motto, 'service above self,' but all of the attributes that Shapiro is known for," she said.

The award is given to someone for outstanding citizenship, achievement, leadership,

dedication and motivation.

McLaughlin has also done work for the education community for more than three decades, with 18 of those years as director of personnel and transportation for the Watertown City School District.

He has also served the community in different capacities for the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, Jefferson Community College Center for Community Studies, Neighbors of Watertown, North Country Arts Council, Samaritan Keep Home, Summit Village, Victims Assistance Center and WPBS.

The Fort Drum Man of the Mountain Award, a prestigious honor given to people who made contributions to the growth and development of Fort Drum and mixing it in with the north country, was awarded to McLaughlin in 2010. He had previously served as the executive director of the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization, now known as Advocate Drum.

McLaughlin, a Vietnam War veteran, served in the U.S. Army from 1967 until 1969 and

was given the Bronze Star and Good Conduct Medal.

He said he did not expect the work he's done to result in this award.

"I'm very appreciative," he said.

McLaughlin said he will be in the north country "for the long run," saying that he loves it in the area.

"It's home," he said. "I'm not a snowbird, we're not leaving." He said that when he found out he would receive the award he was "flabbergasted."

"They really stunned me because that was never where I thought I was going," he said of the announcement made during a Rotary Club meeting in December.

McLaughlin described himself as a "worker bee," adding that he works with "visionaries" and he wants to keep helping out in any way he can.

The room full of people was "overwhelming" he said.

"I'm glad the Chamber does this once a year to bring together all these good people and they'll all be here next year for someone else," he said. "It's a wonderful event."

Lowville Sport & Farm serving the community since 1979

Lowville Sport and Farm is located three and one half miles south of Lowville, just off Rt 12 on the East Martinsburg Rd. They have been serving the community since 1979 and have been a Honda dealer since 1981. They carry new and preowned ATV's, UTV's, Motorcycles and Dirt Bikes. They also sell power equipment including generators, water pumps, snowblowers, lawnmowers, trimmers, tillers and engines. If you are looking for trailers, snow plows and portable

storage buildings, they have those, too.

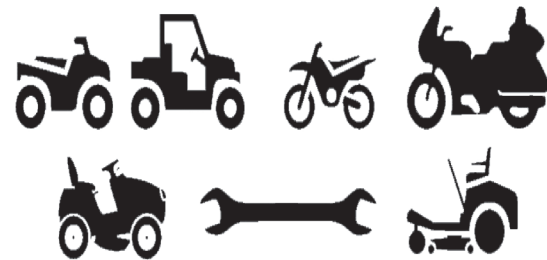
Lowville Sport is way more than just ATV's Motorcycles and UTV's! They carry a full line of lawn and garden equipment from Honda, Hustler, DR Power and Echo.

Lowville Sport and Farm also has an excellent Service Department that works on most makes and models of small engine and power-sports equipment and also offers pickup and delivery to make it easier to have your equipment worked on.

The "Honda Shop" is also Lewis County's Headquarters for helmets and apparel, with many brands available including Fox, FXR, Fly, Alpinestars, Thor and HJC in adult and youth sizes.

The business is owned by Terry and Minette Thisse. Their son Jared is the General Manager. The Thisse's would like to thank all of Lowville Sport's customers for their business and support. You can find all of the great deals they have on their website www.lowvillesport.com

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\$10 million DRI to Lowville

Canton and Alexandria Bay each awarded \$4.5 million through NY Forward

By ALEX GAULT
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This story appeared in the Watertown Daily Times.

LAKE PLACID — Millions of dollars in state grants are coming to the north country villages of Canton, Alexandria Bay and Lowville through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and the NY Forward program.

Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul in January announced Lowville will be the recipient of the \$10 million 2024 DRI grant for the north country.

Lowville officials submitted a plan broken into three main categories, “restore, rediscover, reconnect.”

The plan Lowville officials submitted, Hochul said, would transform the well-positioned village into a regional center focused on local tourism.

“They’re at the intersection of the Adirondack Mountains, Tug Hill Plateau and Thousand Islands,” she said, joking that she would soon be skiing in the Tug Hill herself.

“Watch out for me in the fields,” she said.

Hochul said Lowville’s plan would help to improve public spaces in the village, redevelop blighted buildings and attract development for the core downtown area.

“They’ll become a regional center without losing any of its small town charm,” she said. She added that Lowville won’t lose Lady LeWinDa Milkzalot, the locally famous cow statue that stands watch over the Lowville Producers Dairy on Utica Boulevard.

The plan is available on Lowville’s website, at wdt.me/LowvilleDRI. It includes 26 public and private projects that focus on the State Street corridor and the Three Trees neighborhood, an area the village’s application defines as the “urban heart” of Lewis County. It’s surrounded by a number of major employers in government, manufacturing, retail and education, including Kraft-Heinz, Neenah Paper, the county health system and county offices, and the Lowville Academy and Central School.

The plan also detailed eight ongoing projects representing more than \$62 million in public and private investment, ranging from the \$45 million lighting, water and wastewater infrastructure upgrades undertaken by the village to a \$170,000 renovation at Crave Diner.

Projects detailed for DRI money include plans to renovate the dense, mixed-use core of Lowville’s State Street, with plans to redevelop 21 downtown spaces, including retail spaces, historic and cultural buildings, medical offices, public parks, streets and housing. Other projects include a streetscape redevelopment project, and marketing and branding campaign for Lowville’s downtown, and the installation of wayfinding signs.

The DRI provides funding that is meant to be apportioned among a wide variety of plans, so it may only contribute to a percentage of the overall project cost, with private owners, local government and other grants coming in to fulfill the commitment.

For example, a plan to renovate the vacant Stevens Block of mixed-use buildings at 7623 N. State St., is expected to cost \$1.8 million, with the DRI providing \$1.1 million. A plan to renovate the vacant, mixed-use Kellogg Block on Shady Avenue would use \$734,000 in DRI money for a \$1.5 million project. Not every project included in a DRI application ends up receiving funding, and the projects that do don’t always end up getting the amount originally defined in the DRI application.

Lowville Mayor Joseph G. Beagle was unable to attend Tuesday’s event in person, but watched it stream live on the governor’s website. He said he



Aerial view of downtown Lowville. Provided photo

was excited by the news, which will help push many projects in Lowville forward.

“We will finally be able to move forward with private and public projects,” he said. “We will have to have committee meetings with the state but we got the first step — receiving the DRI.”

Beagle said the village has applied three times before for the DRI. That means years of applications, work and drafting applications. Beagle said he thinks this year was the successful one because of the strength of the village’s application, and the presence of significant private investment in the projects listed this year.

He said the vision for the application, and what he hopes will become the final product, is to return Lowville to the days when many people lived downtown and businesses along State Street thrived.

“I’d like to see the village back like it was in the ‘60s, with apartments on the upper levels and people living downtown,” Beagle said.

Assemblyman Kenneth D. Blankenbush, R-Black River, thanked the governor for awarding Lowville the north country DRI award this year, which he said was the product of years of hard work by Lowville officials.

“Residents patiently waited and formulated a comprehensive plan to boost the local economy, improve infrastructure and increase public services,” he said. “With this great initiative, we are one step closer to a bright future ahead for the north country.”

Canton and Alexandria Bay will each receive \$4.5 million from the NY Forward grant program. Hochul said both villages submitted plans to renovate blighted or run-down areas of the village centers, including housing.

“They’re both developing strategic plans to turn run-down parts of their downtowns into housing,” she said. “That’s the right answer, and revitalizing their downtowns in the process.”

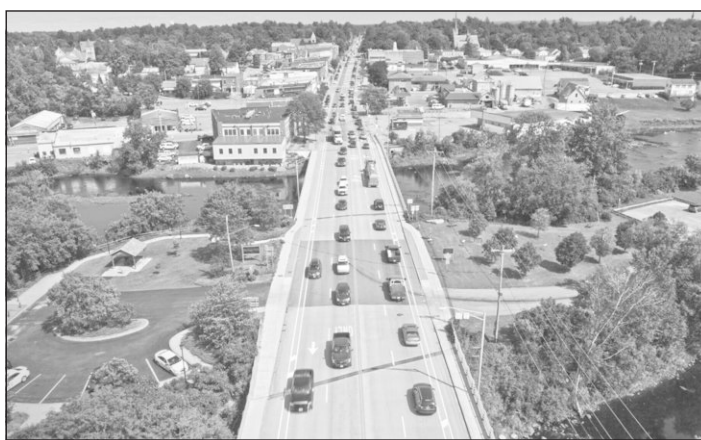
Canton Mayor Michael E. Dalton said he was proud to see Canton receive the NY Forward grant, which has been billed as a smaller grant that follows similar guidelines to the DRI, targeted to smaller communities. Dalton said Canton has put a significant amount of work into applying for the DRI as well as NY Forward. The DRI is in its seventh year, and NY Forward is in its second year.

The Canton plan calls for rebuilding and renovating existing commercial and residential businesses, beautify the Main Street corridor and improve accessibility and activities available downtown.

“With broad participation



Representatives of the village of Lowville accept the \$10 million state Downtown Revitalization Initiative award Tuesday in Lake Placid. Adirondack North Country Association



The village of Canton has been awarded \$4.5 million from the NY Forward program to rebuild and renovate existing commercial and residential businesses, beautify the Main Street corridor and improve accessibility and activities downtown. Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times

from the community and strong support from area businesses, committed stakeholders and private investors, our team has assembled an ambitious set of projects that will transform Canton,” Dalton said.

Dalton said there are many people in the village government who deserve credit for having pursued these grants and put together this year’s application, especially the village’s director of economic development, Leigh Rodriguez, and community economic development assistant Jeni Reed.

“It’s our turn now, and everyone involved should be commended, especially Leigh and Jeni,” he said.

Sen. Daniel G. Stec, R-Queensbury, who represents Canton in the state legislature, said investments like this in

local communities are exactly what’s needed to rebuild and strengthen the north country economy.

“The \$4.5 million in NY Forward funding will help bring new residential and commercial opportunities to Canton and help make it an even better place to live, work or visit,” he said.

In Alexandria Bay, Hochul said the village’s NY Forward application included an impressive amount of private funding for the projects identified as candidates for grant money, with a plan to remove blighted buildings downtown and improve public amenities.

State officials said there has been a significant amount of private investment in recent years in downtown Alexandria Bay, around the James Street corridor especially, and the NY



The village of Alexandria Bay has been awarded \$4.5 million from the NY Forward program. The village has secured private funding for many project proposals aimed at removing blighted buildings downtown and improving public amenities. Watertown Daily Times

Forward grant will help capitalize on those and enhance their impact.

All three villages have become so-called “pro-housing communities,” their village boards having passed resolutions to affirm their commitment to developing more housing within their borders and coordinate project approval plans and development strategies to encourage housing development. Hochul has made becoming a “pro-housing community” a requirement to receive executive discretionary grants like the DRI and NY Forward programs.

Mayor Michael Putnam said the Alexandria Bay community is very grateful to be selected for the \$4.5 million grant this year.

“This award will help greatly progress the businesses in our

small river community to make A-Bay a better place to visit, live and enjoy,” he said.

Assemblyman Scott A. Gray, R-Watertown, who represents both Alexandria Bay and Canton in the state legislature, congratulated both villages and said they are supremely deserving of the grant money.

“These grants are a tribute to the visionary planning and commitment to revitalization displayed by both communities,” he said.

He said Canton’s plan will build its downtown into a hub of housing, retail and entrepreneurship, which will bring vitality and prosperity. He said Alexandria Bay’s plan to enhance its downtown waterfront area will boost both the economy and local quality of life.

Red Barn Meats Inc. Thanks Loyal Customers For 10 Fantastic Years

Another year has come and gone for Red Barn Meats Inc. Jordan and Rachel Brandt and their staff would like to thank the local community and their customers for another successful year.

We celebrated our 10th anniversary in December of 2023 and hope to celebrate many more years with you as a community.

We have enjoyed serving our clients and look forward to working for those who may be interested in our services.

In addition to our meat counter, we have our own website and offer online ordering as well as CSA shares to our customers. CSA is Community Shared Agriculture. The shares are for 12 weeks and include a variety of Pork, Beef, Chicken, fresh eggs, ground meats, steaks, and chops. Pickup is every Friday. There is a savings of 15% by purchasing our products as a share. If interested, customers can order online or call our sales representative at 315-376-7315.

We have specials every week and offer fresh ring bologna and cheese curd every Thursday.

Currently, we have several meat bundles available to purchase as well as a large variety of fresh and frozen products. In addition, we



are offering new specialty items each week on our website.

Our best service to the community is being able to offer USDA inspection to our local producers, and we are happy to serve those looking for a USDA plant to process their animals.

We encourage businesses and farmers to give us a call.

We sincerely appreciate each and every customer and hope to provide you with a pleasant experience and strive to please our customers in this coming year.

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are made at our facility under retail licensing with our own special recipes: Beef Hot Dogs, Summer Sausage, Snack Sticks, Ring Bologna, Ham, and Bacon. Cuts of Beef, Pork, and Chicken are offered daily as well as several flavors of sausage and ground beef.

We are happy to fill orders that fit your budget and will accommodate to the best of our abilities. We also provide local delivery and pickup locations, and will be at several local Farmer's Markets this Spring.

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our services, please consider the following:

We are a USDA inspected and custom facility that offers slaughtering and meat processing for Beef, Pork, Lamb, and Goat.

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We offer a variety of affordable meat bundles for every budget. We sell whole and halves of quality, locally raised pigs.

Check out our February 500 Deal!

Roaster Hogs and Butcher Hogs are available. We offer our own specialty sausages in bulk, links, ropes, or patties as well as beef hot dogs. Beef patties are available in 4-, 6-, or 8-ounce sizes.

All hams and bacon are smoked and cured in our facility.

We offer extra thick bacon, whole or sliced ham, and smoked hocks.

Taking Action to Protect #OurHearts

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States – 1 in 5 people die from it each year, even though it is largely preventable. Research shows that many Americans will likely develop some form of heart disease, but you don't have to be one of them. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), you can take action by making small lifestyle changes that help reduce your risk and improve your overall health.

NHLBI's The Heart Truth® program encourages you to join the #OurHearts movement and take these actions to support a heart-healthy lifestyle:

- Eat better. Select nutritious snacks. Try whole fruits, dried fruits, unsalted rice cakes, fat-free and low-fat yogurt, or raw vegetables. Use herbs and spices instead of salt.

- Add more movement to your day. Sit less. Take the stairs. Park a good walking distance away from your destination. March in place, or walk around the block. Anything that gets your heart beating counts!

- Stop (or don't start) smoking. Make a list of the reasons you want to quit, select a quit date, and talk to a healthcare provider about resources that can help.

- Get enough quality

sleep. If possible, aim for at least 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.

- Manage stress. Use relaxation techniques that combine breathing and focused attention on pleasing thoughts and images to calm the mind and body.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Discuss with your healthcare provider if your weight is in a healthy range. If you need to lose weight, choose healthy foods, get regular exercise, and consider joining a weight loss program.

- Control cholesterol. Make healthy food choices, like limiting saturated fats found in fatty cuts of meat, dairy products, and desserts, increase your physical activity, and don't smoke.

- Manage blood sugar. Monitor your carbohydrate intake and choose complex carbohydrates, like whole grains and legumes, to help control blood sugar levels.

- Control blood pressure. Get your blood pressure checked at each healthcare visit. Ask your provider if you should monitor your blood pressure at home. Knowing your numbers is an important first step to making sure yours are in a healthy range.

- Up to date Vaccines. Make sure your immunizations are up to date. Ask your health care provider which vaccines you might need.

Devote a little time each day to your heart. Remember, self-care is heart care. Ask a family member or friend to join you on your heart-health journey. Personal networks make it easier to stick to heart-healthy habits that can help keep #OurHearts healthy for life.

To learn more about how to take action for your heart and prevent heart disease, visit www.hearttruth.gov.

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Jefferson County Public Health Service



North Country Children's Museum

The North Country Children's Museum is hosting STEAM Programs this upcoming year including a Children's Book Author Series and Total Eclipse Program Events. Programs will be held in the Children's Museum's newly renovated classrooms. The museum is located at 10 Raymond Street in Potsdam. Regular hours are Wednesday through Sunday from 10am to 5pm.

The Children's Book Author Series will be held throughout the 2024 calendar year. In this series, a local children's book author or illustrator will read their story to visitors with time for questions. Following the book reading, museum educators will lead a related, hands-on

STEAM activity for participating children. Upcoming author dates include: Jean Williams-Bergen on Saturday, Feb 24th, Illustrator Ray Whalen on Sunday, April 7th, Laura Lavoie on Saturday, June 15th, Colleen Farwell on Saturday, September 21st, and Justin & Gary VanRipper on Saturday, November 2nd. The Author Series is included with the cost of admission and membership thanks to support from the Badenhausen Fund of the Northern New York Community Foundation.

The Children's Museum will run weekly Saturday Science Programs for families in March and April at 11am-12pm and

See MUSEUM A8

C&S Companies is proud to serve Northern New York!

C&S opened for business in Syracuse in 1968 as a six-person firm concentrated on civil engineering for local municipalities. Over the past 56 years, C&S has expanded from its roots to become a full-service national design, planning, and construction services organization employing over 600 staff. C&S continues to play an active role in enhancing the New York communities it serves through its work improving the state's infrastructure and through its focus on stimulating positive impacts to humanitarian, educational, and community causes through financial support and volunteerism.

With offices in Watertown, Plattsburgh, and throughout the state, C&S offers the personalized service of a small firm, while also having the resources to handle the most complicated multi-discipline projects. C&S works for local, state, and federal government; education and healthcare; the private sector; industry; developers; and the military.

In northern New York, C&S has been working on exciting projects that improve both infrastructure and the community at large. For example, the Lewis County DMV office renovation will greatly improve the functionality, efficiency, and aesthetics of the facility in Lowville. The renovated building will provide shared



services for the DMV and the Board of Elections with a common entrance, shared public restrooms, utilities, and parking area.

In addition to engineering and architecture, C&S provides wide-ranging construction and construction management solutions. With in-house design and construction professionals and resources, C&S can streamline the delivery of everything from small renovations and additions to major reconstruction and large-scale buildings. The



general contracting team works on a variety of commercial, industrial, mixed use, and retail type projects.

C&S provided construction management services to the Lewis County Health Systems who broke

See C&S A8

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During spring and summer months, our products are available to purchase at your local farmers markets. Orders can be called in ahead of time and picked up on site for our customer's convenience.

Our products are also available at several local stores and restaurants including Jeb's in Lowville, Hall Pass in Carthage, Pine Tree in Brantingham, Garland City, Empire Square, Arts Jug, Maggie's and Craft 836 in Watertown, and new locations in Sackets Harbor. North Country Store in Philadelphia, Stony Creek Store in Deer River. We are expanding to local schools including South Lewis.

We plan to expand this year and hope to supply more local businesses, schools, and hospitals with our quality products. In addition, we are happy to supply our customers with products for their special events, graduation parties, gatherings, and BBQs. Roaster hogs, chicken halves, jerked pork, hot dogs, and ground beef patties are all just a call away.

As a business, we strive to meet the needs of our community and ensure affordable prices for local products.

We gladly accept suggestions on how we can offer better services and are always open to new ideas and meeting clients interested in purchasing or marketing

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Red Barn Meats Inc. is located at 9095 Briot Road Croghan, NY 13327. Call 315-346-1254 to schedule an appointment, place an order, or ask questions.

You can reach us by email at redbarnmeatsinc@gmail.com

com or follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Our website is redbarnmeatsinc.com.

Thank you all for another year and your business, and we look forward to serving you in 2024.

Jordan and Rachel Brandt and the staff at Red Barn Inc.

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Construction Management Services for the Lewis County Health Systems Health Pavilion Expansion

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Results of the Center for Community Studies 24th Annual North Country Survey of the Community

By JONATHAN WHEELER
jwheeler@wdt.net

This story appeared in the February edition of NNY Business

WATERTOWN — The biggest issue facing north country residents is inflation and the cost of living, according to Jefferson Community College's annual survey of residents in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties.

Inflation and the cost of living were followed by concerns about unemployment/jobs, affordable housing and homelessness, according to the survey results, released Feb. 1.

Residents in the 2023 survey "continued to express that inflation is problematic. When asked the open-ended question, 'What do you think is the single largest issue that is facing residents of the North Country right now?' inflation was by far the most common free response, provided by 28% of participants," the survey summary reads.

"Concern with inflation is significantly higher among Lewis County residents when compared to the other two studied counties, and among those North Country residents who describe themselves as conservative in their political beliefs," the summary adds.

Student researchers, overseen by faculty at JCC's Center for Community Studies, collected responses between Oct. 23 and Nov. 1 online, by phone and in person on post at Fort Drum.

There were 1,171 total surveys completed, with half coming through online surveys across Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties.

Joel F. LaLone, director of JCC's Center for Community Studies, said the results fairly depict how the tri-county area feels.

"We certainly have no evidence that we don't have a representative sample," he said.

LaLone said all questions in this survey have been asked in the past so the center can track progress. The first version of the community survey collected responses in 2000 from Jefferson County residents. The survey expanded to include Lewis County starting in 2007, and started

Community Issue	Region % rate as a "Major Issue" in 2016-2018	Region % rate as a "Major Issue" in 2023	Jefferson Results % rate as a "Major Issue" 2023	Lewis Results % rate as a "Major Issue" 2023	St. Lawrence Results % rate as a "Major Issue" 2023
Heroin, or Other Opiate, Abuse (earlier year=2017)	73%	54%	56%	35%	57%
Poverty (earlier year=2017)	52%	41%	37%	30%	47%
Mental Health (earlier year=2016)	24%	38%	36%	29%	42%
Prescriptive Drug Abuse (earlier year=2018)	52%	37%	40%	24%	37%
Alcohol Abuse (earlier year=2017)	48%	33%	36%	25%	32%
Crime (earlier year=2017)	35%	21%	19%	7%	27%

including St. Lawrence County in 2015.

Response choices to the questions generally were either "excellent," "good," "fair," "poor," or "don't know."

In general, the tri-county area seems to be pleased with the quality of K-12 education. In Jefferson County, 37.2% responded that the quality is good, 13% said the quality is excellent and 7.3% said the quality of education is poor. About 17.5% said they don't know and 25.1% said it's fair.

Of those surveyed in Lewis County, 56.3% said that the quality of education is good, 19.3% said it's excellent, 7.2% said it's poor and 6.1% said they don't know. About 11.1% said it's fair.

In St. Lawrence County, 50.5% of those surveyed said the education quality is good, 6.3% said it's excellent, 13.1% said it's poor, 6.2% said they don't know and 24% said it's fair.

Child care is something that survey takers said could be improved. In Jefferson County,

only 2.8% of those surveyed said the availability of child care is excellent and 13.2% said it's good, while 29.3% said it's poor, 22% said it's fair and 32.7% said they don't know.

In Lewis County, numbers are similar, with 2.7% responding that access to child care is excellent. About 16.7% said it's good, 27.4% said it's poor, 26% said it's fair and 27.2% said they don't know.

Of those surveyed in St. Lawrence County, just 1.5% said that access to child care is excellent, and 11.8% said it's good. About 34.5% said it's poor, 30.4% said it's fair and 21.9% said they don't know.

Overall, people are not confident in the way that the state is heading. All three counties had at least 60% of those surveyed who said the state is heading in the wrong direction. Overall, 67.1% of those surveyed across the tri-county area said the state is headed in the wrong direction, with just 18.5% saying the state is headed in the right direction, and 14.5% saying they don't

know.

People surveyed also believe opioid abuse is an issue in their county, and a big issue in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties.

In Jefferson County, 56.2% of those surveyed said they believe opioid abuse is a major issue in the community, 21% said it's a moderate issue, 3.2% said it is not an issue, 9% said it's a minor issue and 10.5% said they don't know. Numbers are similar in St. Lawrence County with 56.9% believing opioid abuse is a major issue, 26.4% believing it's a moderate issue and 4.6% believing it's not an issue. About 5.5% believe it's a minor issue and 6.6% say they don't know.

In Lewis County, those surveyed do believe that opioid abuse is an issue, but not as big of an issue in their community compared to the other two counties. About 35.3% of those surveyed believe it's a major issue, 32.6% believe it's a moderate issue and 15.1% believe it's a minor issue. Just half a percent of those surveyed in Lewis County believe it's not an issue

and 16.5% said they don't know.

Abortion has continued to be a lightning rod after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June 2022.

Those surveyed in the tri-county area appear to support abortion rights. About three-quarters of those surveyed said they at least somewhat believe that abortion is a woman's right that should be protected. About one-quarter of those surveyed said they at least somewhat believe that abortion is wrong and that it should not be allowed.

Politically for the three counties, 32.5% of those surveyed consider themselves to be conservative, 38.6% consider themselves to be middle of the road, 14.4% said they are liberal and 14.5% said they do not know.

The approximate margin of error for this survey is plus or minus 3.2%.

The survey was sponsored by the Northern New York Community Foundation, the Development Authority of the North Country, the Lewis County Legislature and Car-Freshner Corp.

Museum

From A7

2pm-3pm leading up to a public, outdoor Total Solar Eclipse Program on April 8th. Eclipse related programs include: March 9th Make a balloon rocket, March 16th Cup Drop Experiment, March 23 Anti-gravity in a bottle, March 30 Make and launch a rocket, April 6 Pop a balloon using the sun's energy.

On Monday, April 8th from 1:00pm- 3:30pm the Children's Museum will host a free, outdoor program in Garner Park, Potsdam near the museum. Attendees will be given special eclipse-viewing glasses and museum educators will run science activities. Come celebrate this historical, awe-inspiring celestial event with the North Country with Children's Museum! Total Eclipse Programs at the Children's Museum are included with the cost of admission and membership thanks to the Simon's Foundation.

Visit the website www.northcountrychildrensmuseum.org or Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/ncchildrensmuseum> for more information.

C&S

From A7

ground on April 20, 2022 on a two-year, \$32 million capital project which enhances the healthcare of Lewis County residents for generations to come. This is the biggest renovation in the 90-year history of Lewis County Health System. The project includes constructing a new 26,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art surgical center and the renovation of the 17,000-square-foot medical, surgical, and ICU units. Lewis County Health Systems is the first critical access center in the nation to receive certain specific funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide needed medical services to those in rural areas.

C&S Companies is proud to be a member of the team to make this project materialize; providing preconstruction services and Construction Management services throughout the entire construction and renovation phases of the facility. "Our construction services are a surprise to many in the area," said Anthony Fiorentino, Sr., business development representative for Northern New York. "We are well-known for our architecture and engineering expertise, but the construction and general contracting business continues to grow. Our design-build approach focuses on collaboration between the design and construction team and the owner from the beginning of the project - improving efficiency, reducing waste, and maintaining control of the schedule and budget."

More information about C&S's services, project experience, and commitment to clients can be found at their website, www.cscos.com.

Naturally Lewis awards \$100,000 to six Lewis County businesses Number Three Wind Farm agreement funding business growth



Red Barn Meats in Croghan. Watertown Daily Times

By NATURALLY LEWIS

This story appeared in the February edition of NNY Business

LEWIS COUNTY – Naturally Lewis has announced the recipients of the Building Business Fund, an opportunity designed to provide matching funds to businesses looking to scale-up their business operations through various "tools." A total of \$100,000 has been awarded to six businesses in Lewis County. The awarded projects are estimated to have an impact of over \$346,000 for the local economy.

The Building Business Fund aims to assist businesses that are looking to expand or diversify their business and demonstrate an overall benefit to the community with matching grants greater than \$10,000. The competition for this opportunity was particularly competitive with a total of 28 applicants

with over \$1,000,000 in funding requests. The award recipients are as follows:

Red Barn Meats (Croghan): \$40,000 funding will assist with new refrigeration to support their smokehouse expansion project.

Tug Hill Estate (Lowville): \$20,000 funding will assist with a new walk-in cooler and freezer to support their growing list of weddings, events and dinners that require catered services.

E.M.M. Heating Services LLC: \$10,000 funding will assist with the purchase of a geothermal installation trailer and tools to support the expansion of his services.

Hopenhagen Farms (Copenhagen): \$10,000 funding will assist with the purchase of a compact tractor to support their growth of accessible agritourism tours for all ages and stages.

HumbleBee Farms (Lyons Falls): \$10,000 funding will assist with the purchase of equipment to establish a retail market and order fulfillment center.

Open Sky Wellness, LLC (Lowville, NY): \$10,000 funding will assist with the purchase of kitchen appliances and tools to establish a commercial kitchen for educational purposes.

Funds for this opportunity have been made available through Naturally Lewis' Community Economic Development Program. This program was created through a Host Community Agreement in partnership with Number Three Wind. Through this agreement, Number Three Wind has committed approximately \$150,000 per year - for the next 30 years - to be invested into Lewis County through new business development and impactful community



Red Barn meats. Watertown Daily Times

projects. Program focuses are determined on an annual basis by the Community Economic Development Program Committee and will be available each year.

Applications for this program underwent an evaluation process by the Community Economic Development Program Committee, comprising six community leaders and one representative from the Lewis County Development Corporation Board. The Lewis County

Development Corporation Board has given authority to the Community Economic Development Program Committee to determine awards at the time of application review.

For information about the Building Business Fund, the 2024 Community Economic Development Program focuses, and other Naturally Lewis initiatives, please visit naturallylewis.com or follow Naturally Lewis on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn at @naturallylewis.



The Scott Phelps General Contracting crew does detailed trim and electrical work on the ceilings inside the former Strand Theater Wednesday. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

Business & theater incoming

Neighbors-JCC partnership bringing life back to Strand building, empty stores

By CRAIG FOX
cfox@wdt.net

This story appeared in the Watertown Daily Times.

WATERTOWN — Jefferson Community College's \$3 million downtown education center project on lower Franklin Street is finally taking shape.

Since June, a construction crew has been busy working on transforming the former Strand Theater and a series of vacant storefronts into what will be a performing arts center and JCC's downtown entrepreneurship center.

Using \$2.5 million in Downtown Revitalization Initiative funding, which was awarded to the city of Watertown in 2017, JCC is partnering with Neighbors of Watertown Inc., a local housing and redevelopment organization, on what has been called a transformational project for Franklin Street and all of downtown.

On Wednesday, the Watertown Daily Times got a sneak peek of the center and the beehive of activity there during a tour.

On the heels of the December opening of the Watertown Family YMCA's \$27.5 million Community and Aquatics Center on Arsenal Street, the education center is an integral part of downtown's renaissance, Neighbors executive director Reginald J. Schweitzer Jr. said.

"I think it's coming along and we're seeing progress," he said.

Originally to be completed by the end of last year, the project is now slated to be done in May. About 60% of the work has been done, he said.

The renovated buildings, at 124 to 136 Franklin St., will feature lots of glass, interior brick restoration, a new look on its exterior, original tin ceilings and several common areas.

The project consists of JCC's entrepreneurship center and a 120-seat performing arts center in the Strand Theater portion of the 122-year-old building.

The partners are

redeveloping the buildings to support entrepreneurs and offer workforce development training and applied learning opportunities.

The college's Small Business Development Center, now located on the JCC campus, will move into 10,000 square feet of space.

The center, in the former Lamont Building, also will offer co-working office space for 10 fledgling businesses.

JCC intends to name the center The NEST, an acronym for Neighbors Entrepreneur Study Teachers.

The former Strand Theater will be the centerpiece of the facility, with a large meeting room to accommodate 120 people, an audio/visual room and a conference room.

An enclosed glass mezzanine atrium will lead to a roof patio and garden.

A local arts group that formed in 2020, Harmoni Performing Arts Community, will lease and operate the theater, where concerts, comedy shows, theater productions, movie showings and other performances will be presented.

Without state funding, the arts group would still be looking for a home, executive director Joseph Foy said.

"There would be no way we'd be this far along," he said.

Harmoni also intends to lease one of the small spaces in the center for its office.

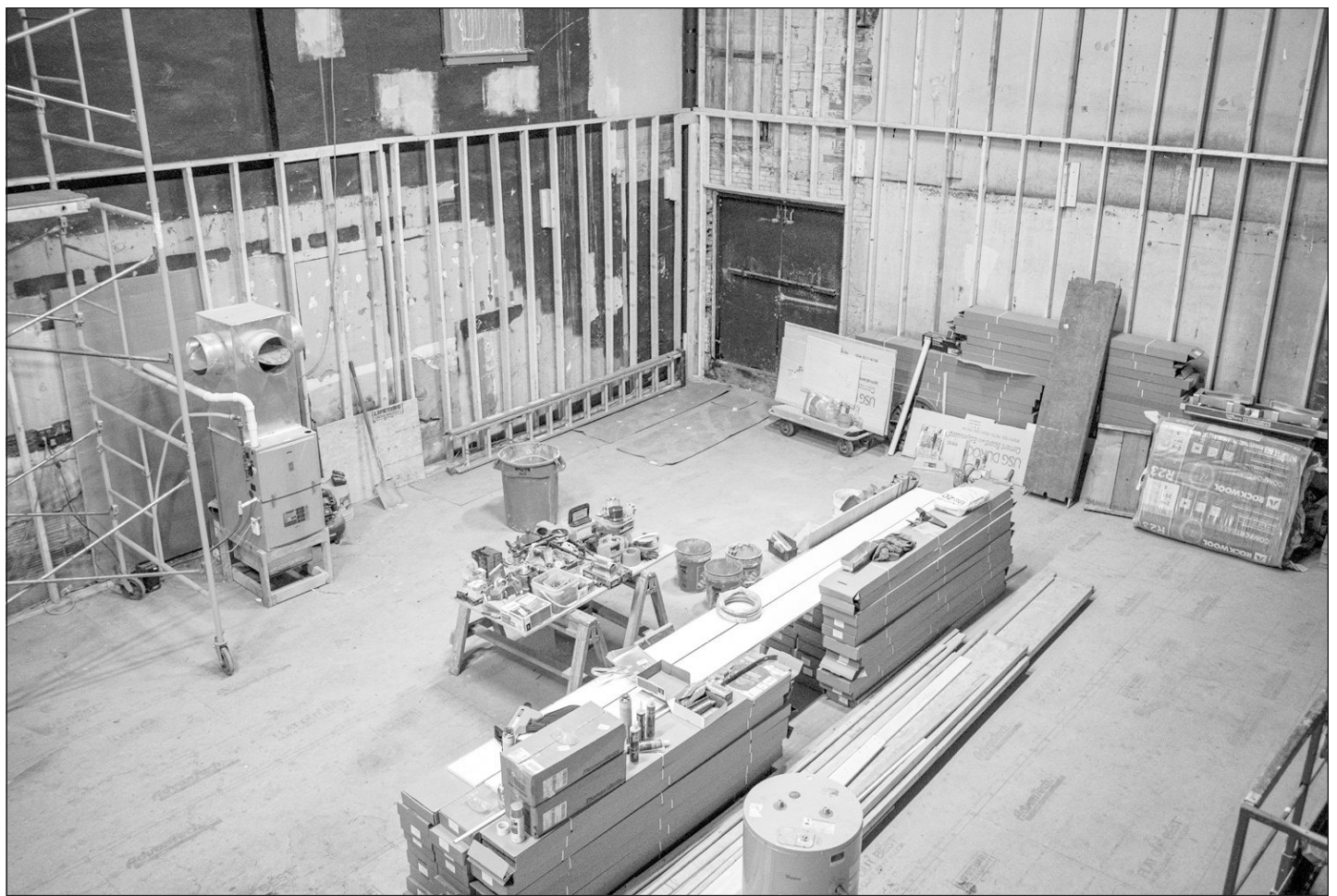
The theater, 136 Franklin St., will also hold JCC events, Schweitzer said.

Neighbors hopes to find tenants for two small commercial spaces totaling about 2,000 square feet in one of the former storefronts.

On Wednesday, the crew worked on sawing wood trimming that will be used near the center's tin ceilings, installed HVAC and electrical systems and continued to lay down hardwood flooring.

Much of the work can't be seen by the public. A temporary enclosure has encapsulated the storefronts so work-

ers can make progress on



The theater section inside The NEST building, under renovation on Franklin Street. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

installing new doors and windows and complete other exterior work during the winter.

Scott Phelps General Contracting, Watertown, is the general contractor. Crawford & Stearns Architect and Preservation Planners, Syracuse, designed the project.

The New York Department of State oversees the city's \$10 million DRI program, while Empire State Development assists in the process.

Neighbors is providing the \$500,000 needed for the project.

Three years ago, Neighbors purchased the old theater and storefronts from developer Jake Johnson, who had once planned to renovate the structures using the \$2.5 million.

JCC also originally planned on a different project with the DRI funding, but the COVID-19 pandemic and lower enrollment put those efforts on hold.



The former Strand and Lamont buildings on Franklin Street, soon to be The NEST, after renovations by Neighbors of Watertown are complete. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

Jefferson Co. prepares to take over old Deferiet paper mill site

By CRAIG FOX
cfox@wdt.net

This story appeared in the Watertown Daily Times Feb. 1.

DEFERIET — The Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency is putting the pieces together to start planning for redeveloping the old St. Regis Paper Mill in Deferiet.

The JCIDA board on Thursday agreed to put together a local development corporation to oversee the redevelopment of the former paper mill.

In April, Jefferson County is expected to default on the complex against its current owner, Deferiet Development LLC, and acquire its title.

That's when the focus will turn to getting the environmental issues on the site cleaned up and then to transfer the property to the new LDC, said David J. Zembiec, CEO of Jefferson County Economic Development, the JCIDA's sister organization.

The LDC will oversee the property development with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, known as NYSERDA, he said.

The property consists of dilapidated buildings that once made up the paper mill before it closed more than 20 years ago.

Part of the property would be marketed for a renewable energy project and the remainder of it would be for commercial redevelopment, Zembiec said.



Heavy equipment is staged last winter on the property that housed the St. Regis Paper Mill to demolish unsafe buildings around the Brookfield hydroelectric power plant and along the easement to the facility. Elaine M. Avallone/Johnson Newspapers

The JCIDA's legal counsel, Joseph Frateschi, of the Rochester law firm of Harris Beach, suggested that the LDC committee consists of members of the JCIDA and the JCLDC, plus

the mayor of Deferiet and the supervisor of the town of Wilma.

In a joint effort, the town of Wilna and villages of Deferiet and Carthage are developing a

comprehensive plan, and = included the mill site in discussions for that plan during community meetings last week.

The JCIDA would most likely start the request for

proposals, RFP, process for the cleanup this summer.

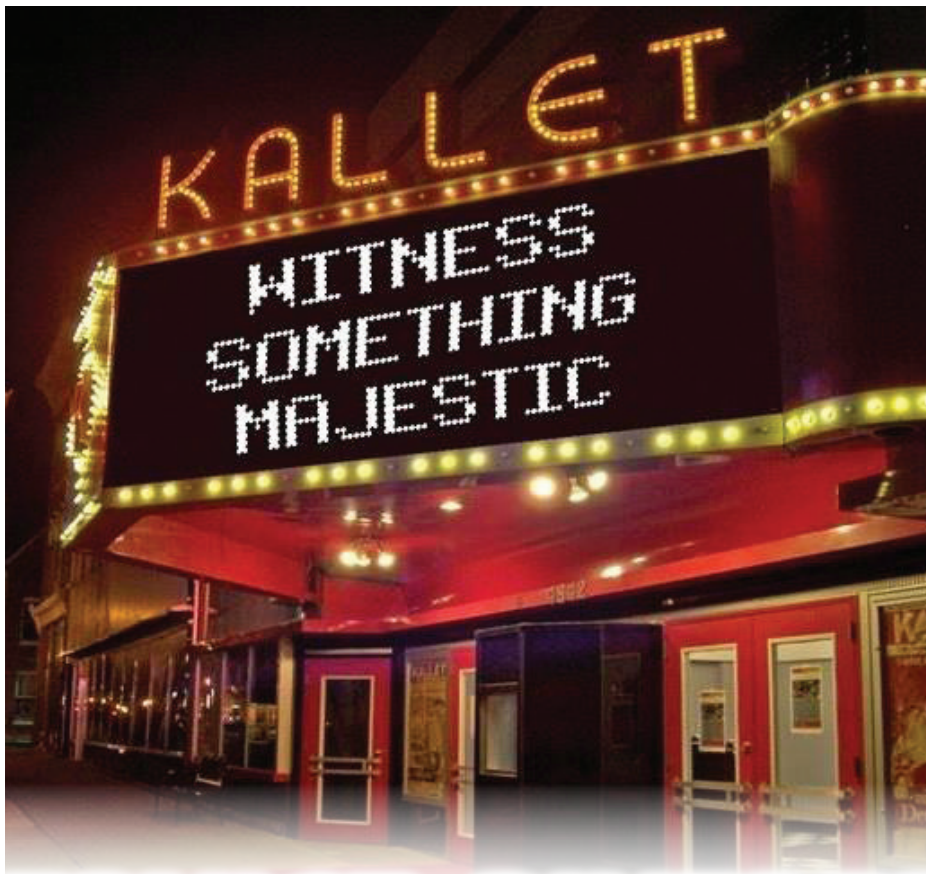
In 2021, the JCIDA agreed to spend \$50,000 on a feasibility study to determine if the old paper

mill in Deferiet could be used for a solar project.

Deferiet Development owes \$2 million in back taxes over several years to the county and other taxing jurisdictions.

March 2, 2024

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The former Spokes Craft Beer and Tapas on Watertown's Public Square. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

Bad Apple restaurant will move into Spokes

By CRAIG FOX
cfox@wtdt.net

WATERTOWN — Another Bad Apple will soon be joining the local restaurant and bar landscape.

Shannon Exford, who owns Bad Apple restaurants/bars on Arsenal and Washington streets and another near Fort Drum, will be moving into the former Spokes on the Square.

Donald W. Rutherford, CEO of the Watertown Local Development Corp., also known as the Watertown Trust, confirmed on Wednesday that another Bad Apple will occupy the storefront at 81 Public Square.

Spokes on the Square, also formerly known as Spokes Craft Beer and Tapas, closed in December and its owner, Jamie Danielson, moved out of state, leaving a \$35,000 unpaid loan to the Watertown Trust.

Rutherford said he was relieved that Bad Apple will be replacing Spokes.

"It's the best scenario for the situation," he said, "especially since it's putting in a seasoned operator."

On Wednesday, the Watertown Trust's revolving loan committee approved a \$28,000 loan to the new business in the downtown location. The owner will invest \$23,600 in the project.

The Trust's full board is expected to finalize the loan on Thursday morning.

Revolving loan committee member Michael Pierce said he's satisfied with Exford's plans for the downtown location, saying she "has viable assets."

Rutherford said that Bad Apple Downtown will take on a different theme than the others.

"Each Bad Apple location is known for its own theme



Front-of-house Manager Kate E. Hunter, left, and owner Shannon M. Exford on opening day in May 2022 at The Bad Apple Garage Grill and Bar on Washington Street in Watertown. Watertown Daily Times

and menu preventing us from competing with ourselves by offering known quality in a different atmosphere," Exford wrote in loan paperwork to the Trust.

In the loan application, Exford, who couldn't be reached for comment, described the downtown Bad Apple as a "small plate ale house and piano bar with intentions of bringing back the outdoors

patio dining."

The restaurant/bar will initially employ 11 workers during the first year of operation and three more in the second.

Exford will lease the storefront from the Dephtereos family, who own the nearby Crystal Restaurant.

Exford started her growing local restaurant empire with the original Bad Apple in Burville but closed because of

issues with the building, she wrote.

In 2015, she then opened the Wicked Bad Apple in Glenfield, which continues to operate. A year later, she added another one in Cape Vincent, fully renovating the restaurant and motel until it closed after the building was sold.

In 2020, Exford came to Watertown opening the new version of the Bad Apple Saloon

on Arsenal Street. She started at that location at the height of the COVID pandemic.

Two years later, she expanded to the Bad Apple Garage in a former oil change garage on Washington Street. In 2023, she added Bad Apple Black River, catering to a Fort Drum crowd.

She also runs a catering business out of the Arsenal Street location and introduced

two of its own beers, Bad Apple Pilsner and Bad Apple IPA and a vodka in 2023.

She also owns a bar and tanning salon a couple block downs from the Arsenal Street restaurant.

According to her loan application, Exford plans to open yet another Bad Apple Garage in an oil change business on the city's north side in 2025.

Jefferson Community College: Featured Honors Program Student

By PAMELA J. DIXON
Jefferson Community College

Ashley C. Howland, Sandy Creek, is the featured Jefferson Community College (JCC) Honors Program student for the month of February 2024. Howland is a childhood education major, JCC and SUNY Potsdam jointly registered program. For one of her honors options, she

created a children's poem utilizing embroidery and quilting techniques.

The Jefferson Community College Honors Program offers students with exceptional academic skills the opportunity to receive enriched instruction within their current program of study. For the Honors Program, students select three courses within their

curriculum, and enhance them as Honors Options. The option is based on a project agreed to by the student and a faculty member willing to work closely with the student to provide a unique and rewarding experience. Students also take the Honors Seminar, a unique inter-disciplinary course open only to program participants. The seminar

examines a single theme each semester and features guest speakers from a variety of disciplines and often includes some sort of field experience.

Successful program participants earn a prestigious Honors Graduate designation on their academic transcript for each Honors Option course. Students demonstrating excellent academic

achievement in high school or who have completed 12 credit hours of college coursework are invited to apply for admission to the Honors Program.

For more information, visit www.sunyjefferson.edu or contact Honors Program coordinator, Dr. Joshua Canale, at jcanale@sunyjefferson.edu.



Ashley Howard. Contributed.

Samaritan’s Commitment to Community Shines with Expansion of Mental Health and Cardiology Services

WATERTOWN, NY — The Samaritan Health System continues to be a leader in health, wellness, and prevention, ensuring appropriate services are available in our region. Continuing its long-time commitment to the community, Samaritan seeks to improve the availability of mental health services and has taken steps to provide the best cardiac care for those concerned with heart health in the North Country.

First, with the future of the mental health of our community at stake, in 2023, Samaritan Medical Center announced a historic \$2.5 million unbudgeted construction project to improve and expand emergent mental and behavioral health services.

“We are in the throes of a mental health crisis,” Tina O’Neil, director of mental health services at Samaritan, said. “It’s not just here in the North Country, many people from all over the country are reporting feelings of psychological distress including sadness or hopelessness for many days in a row. They need help. They need a place to go to address their emotions.”

Expected to be complete in the summer of 2024, a new 12-bed secure unit will more than double the capacity of the current five-bed emergency department behavioral health unit (BHU) to better meet the needs of the community, including children, teens, and adults. As the average daily census of psychiatric patients continues to increase — it was approximately eight patients in 2023, with a high of over 20 at one time — this expansion becomes even more necessary.

“Currently, when the BHU exceeds its normal and overflow capacities, psychiatric patients are assigned to medical beds within the emergency department. This has two immediate impacts — first, there are fewer beds to treat medical patients, and second, more staff members are needed to watch psychiatric patients, because of the inherent safety risks in a traditional medical room,” Thomas H. Carman, president and CEO of Samaritan Medical Center, said.

In addition to the emergency department’s expansion, Samaritan Medical Center is planning to add beds to the adult inpatient mental health unit (IMHU). An application was submitted to the New York State Office of Mental Health to increase capacity from 34 to 39 beds. With the unit consistently at full capacity, expansion is necessary to meet community needs. Roughly 50% of the adults who arrive at the emergency department for a mental health crisis are admitted to Samaritan’s IMHU for stabilization and a treatment plan, and the average stay in the IMHU is seven to 10 days. This expansion project will cost approximately \$1 million.

And, in February 2024, Samaritan announced the recent addition of cardiology services under the Samaritan umbrella. Formerly known as Cardiology Associates of Northern New York, the newly named Samaritan Cardiology will benefit patients in need of heart health treatment.

“This new partnership improves a valuable asset for our community,” Carman, said. “Working together will allow us to do big things and provide services where they’re very much needed.”

Dr. James Willis, and Kate Symenow, PA-C, provide clinical services, cardiology consultations, preventive cardiac care, cardiology follow-up care, hypertension management, pacemaker, and defibrillator follow-up.

To learn more about Samaritan’s continued commitment to the community through quality and compassionate services, visit samaritanhealth.com.

By the Numbers: Behavioral Health in the Emergency Department

In 2023, Samaritan’s emergency department (ED) cared for 35,073 patients. The data below illustrates how care in the ED is influenced by our community’s need for behavioral health care services, and how that need has increased.

Between July 2022 and December 2023:

841 children arrived at Samaritan’s ED for a behavioral health crisis

- 275 needed hospitalization and were transferred to an inpatient facility

3,425 adults arrived at Samaritan’s ED for a behavioral health crisis

- 1,757 were admitted to Samaritan’s Inpatient Mental Health Unit
- 1,357 were stabilized in the ED and discharged with care plans
- 136 were transferred to another facility for psychiatric care

Between 2021 and 2022:

- Average pediatric length of stay increased from 30 hours to 35 hours, and in 2023 was 43 hours
- Average adult length of stay increased from 12 to 22 hours, and in 2023 was 15 hours



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SamaritanHealth.com/WoundCare



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To learn more, visit

SamaritanHealth.com/WalkerCenter



MEDICAL ONCOLOGY

PROGRESS



Clifton-Fine Hospital, a 20-bed critical access center in Star Lake, is planning extensive renovations to its emergency department as it prepares to convert to a Rural Emergency Hospital, Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times

Changes coming at Clifton-Fine Hospital with emergency department expansion

By **BRIAN KELLY**
bkelly@wdt.net

STAR LAKE — Several changes will be coming to Clifton-Fine Hospital in the coming year as the facility in the Adirondack Park adapts to changes in local demographics and the needs of rural health care delivery.

Since 1951, the hospital has been the preferred health care provider for southern St. Lawrence County and that won't change. What will change is its current designation as a Critical Access Hospital and a \$21 million expansion of its emergency department that will accompany the designation change.

The hospital is in the process of converting to a Rural Emergency Hospital designation, a move that will necessitate closing its underutilized 20-bed inpatient unit, but that will open greater access to emergency care for a community that is at least an hour's drive from emergency departments in places such as Potsdam or Watertown.

Hospital CEO Deirdra D. Sorrell said the designation change is needed because, like many rural hospitals, Clifton-Fine is experiencing a population decline in the area that supports it and fewer people means less usage of certain services, including inpatient services.

While the hospital presently has 20 beds available for inpatient use of up to 72 hours, Sorrell said the average daily patient census for those beds is usually one or fewer patients, as has been the case for many years.

"We still staff it as if we have patients, but sometimes we have none," she said. "That's just not cost-effective."

It also isn't sustainable, which is why Rural Emergency Hospital designations were established by Congress in 2020.

"Rural Emergency Hospitals were sort of the federal government's answer



A rendering of a room in the emergency department at Clifton-Fine Hospital once planned extensive renovations are complete. Rendering by Holt Architects, Syracuse



See HOSPITAL B2 A rendering of a room in the emergency department at Clifton-Fine Hospital once planned extensive renovations are complete. Rendering by Holt Architects, Syracuse

Hospital

From B1

to hospital closures,” Sorrell said. “If you can’t survive in that environment, you close.”

The hospital is now running at an about \$2 million deficit annually, but Sorrell said that a change to a Rural Emergency Hospital designation will enable Clifton-Fine to qualify for about \$3.2 million in annual federal subsidies.

“This will absolutely turn us around,” she said. “That’s why this needs to happen. We can’t continue to operate at a loss.”

The designation shortens the time someone can stay at Clifton-Fine from three days until the patient can be stabilized and transferred to 24 to 48 hours. While inpatients from Clifton-Fine are primarily transferred to Samaritan Medical Center in Watertown, with which Clifton-Fine is affiliated, patients are always allowed their preference as to where they will receive continuing care.

“Absolutely people have a say and a choice of where they go,” Sorrell said.

All of the other services offered at Clifton-Fine will remain unchanged, including its primary care clinic, imaging and radiology, laboratory services and physical therapy, among others. A big change will be the state-of-art emergency department wing for which ground will be broken in June. Sorrell said the expansion will create a completely new space for the community, including all new radiology equipment, for which a \$1 million campaign is under way to raise funding.

The emergency department remains busy with people seeking treatment from “fish hooks to cardiac arrest,” according to Sorrell, treating about five to eight patients daily, or roughly 200 people a month.

“That’s really an important resource to not pull out of here. You really need that here,” she said.

So while one change is made to the way the hospital operates, a second change will transform the quality of care that patients can expect in the future.

“We’re setting ourselves up for this perfectly,” Sorrell said. “It’s exciting. It will be a really good move for us and hopefully it will sustain us for the next 70 years here.”



A rendering of a room in the emergency department at Clifton-Fine Hospital once planned extensive renovations are complete. Rendering by Holt Architects, Syracuse



A rendering of a room in the emergency department at Clifton-Fine Hospital once planned extensive renovations are complete. Rendering by Holt Architects, Syracuse



A portion of the existing emergency department at Clifton-Fine Hospital in Star Lake. The hospital is planning extensive renovations to its emergency department. Provided photo

St. Lawrence Health prepared for all your medical needs

St. Lawrence Health (SLH), an affiliate of Rochester Regional Health, is comprised of three hospitals, Canton-Potsdam Hospital (CPH) with its Level III Trauma Center, Gouverneur Hospital (GH), and Massena Hospital (MH). It offers specialty care across more than 40 outpatient practices and primary care facilities in Brasher Falls, Canton, Colton, DeKalb Junction, Edwards, Gouverneur, Louisville, Massena, Norfolk, and Potsdam.

St. Lawrence Health employs 2,104 staff, including 216 full-time medical providers. Throughout 2023, SLH recruited more than 20 new providers among the specialty fields of anesthesiology, dermatology, emergency medicine, general surgery, hospital medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, oncology, orthopedic surgery, pain management, physiatry, primary care, and psychiatry.

In January 2023, the steel framework of the future four-story Regional Care Pavilion at CPH began taking shape as the first beam was lifted into place. The Pavilion will house an expanded emergency department with 28



CPH's Surgical Services department received a new da Vinci Xi Robotic Surgical System in March 2023.

Members of the robotics surgical team are shown with the System; (L to R) Senior Director of Surgical Services Jeffrey Eckdahl, RN, CSSM; Director of Robotic Surgery and General Surgeon Michael Oakley, MD, FACS; and registered nurses Kyle Weems, Kaylin Switzer, and Kristie Peretta.

now afforded access to state-of-the-art, minimally invasive robotic surgery through da Vinci Xi. The da Vinci Xi System's immersive 3D-HD vision system provides surgeons with a highly magnified

view and offers patients smaller incisions, less scarring, a decrease in length of stay in the hospital, and a significantly shortened recovery time.

Through the hard work and long hours of the negotiating team, SLH's three hospitals reached an unprecedented five-year contract with their represented nurses.

Serving the North Country for eight-plus years, SLH's Clinical and Rural Health Research team, including

treatment rooms, four flex exam rooms, four resuscitation and trauma rooms, and central clinical station; 60 private, single occupancy inpatient rooms with family accommodations; a new registration and reception area, gift shop, and coffee kiosk. SLH anticipates a fall 2024 grand opening.

SLH formalized its acquisition and assumed ownership of Seaway Valley Ambulance (SVA) in Massena. As one piece of SLH's larger Rural Health Strategy, expansion of the ambulance service will help ensure residents of the North Country have critical access to healthcare, including transporting

patients between hospitals locally and across the State.

St. Lawrence Health celebrated its first two graduating classes from RRH's Isabel Graham Hart School of Practical Nursing (IGH) in Potsdam. Established to afford local education for individuals wanting to advance their careers and help resolve ongoing nursing shortages, the School enables SLH team members and area residents to grow into a professional development career track to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). The school produced 10 new LPNs into the field in 2023, with 6 students currently enrolled and working toward a spring 2024

graduation. Patients of SLH are

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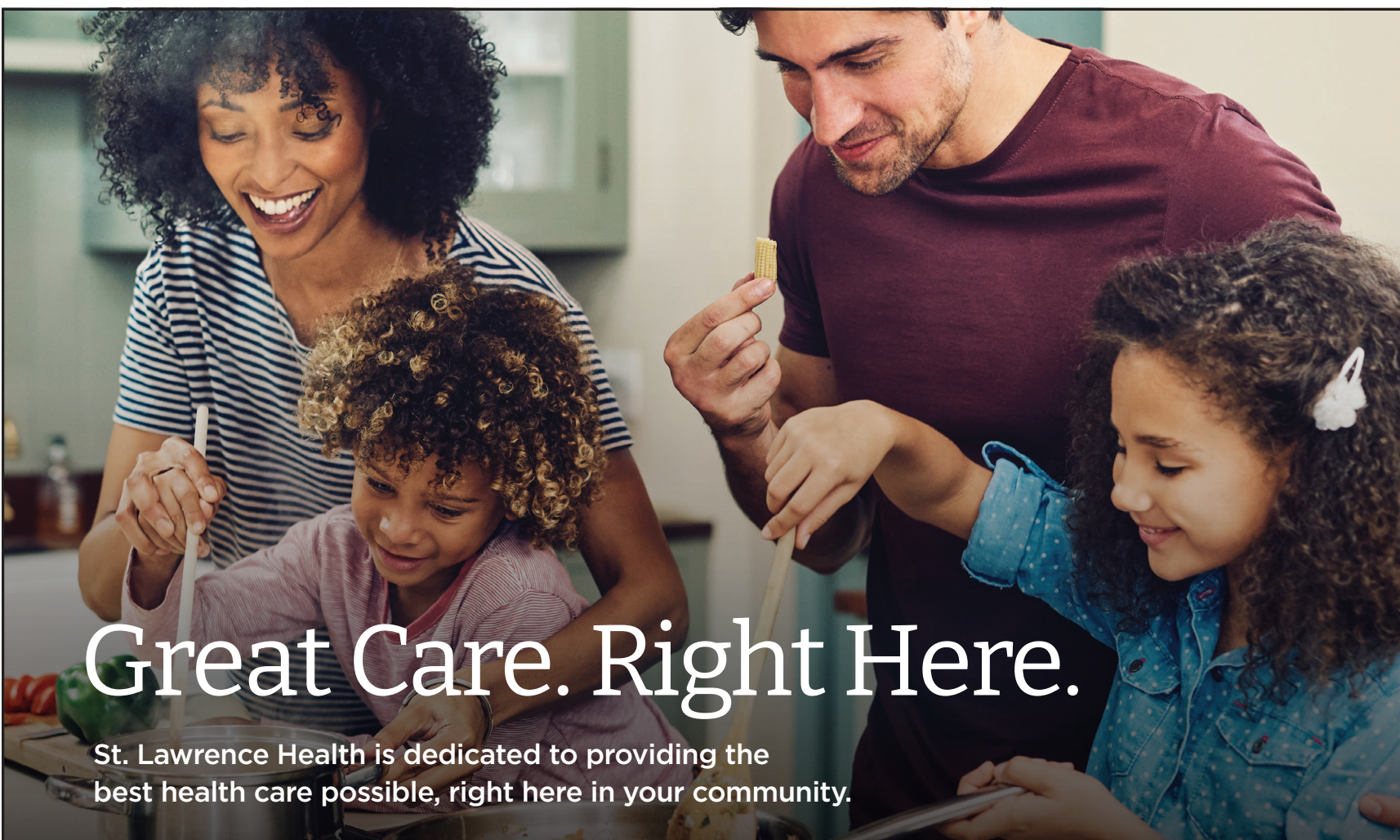
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See SLH B4



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|--|---|---|

3
Hospital Locations

11
Primary Care Sites

4
Pediatric Sites

40+
Specialty Practices

2
Urgent Care Centers

ST LAWRENCE HEALTH

An Affiliate of Rochester Regional Health

stlawrencehealthsystem.org

SLH

From B3

Rheumatologist and contributing author of ACTIV-1 manuscript Eyal Kedar, MD, was recognized by The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) for their work and participation in the ACTIV-1 clinical trial.

Canton-Potsdam Hospital received certification as a Primary Stroke Center, affirming the Hospital's readiness to handle a full range of stroke-related medical conditions. A combination of the right equipment, personnel, and training certification affords North Country residents specialized and timely care locally, resulting in faster treatment for stroke patients, minimizing the potential for brain damage and disability. Additionally, CPH recognized Mike and Nancy Griffin with a Community Service Award for the vast multitude of ways they support our communities.

Gouverneur Hospital installed state-of-the-art patient monitors in its medical-surgical patient rooms. The newly integrated monitoring technologies provide noninvasive and continuous measurements that automate and streamline the flow of patient data to improve clinical efficiency. Additionally, GH recognized the Gouverneur Police Department with a Community Service Award for its exceptional service in preserving and protecting the citizenry and property of the residents of Gouverneur.

Massena Hospital achieved a LeapFrog Safety Grade A score, after being reviewed among 30 national performance measures. An A grade is the highest accomplishment possible and reinforces team members' commitment to keeping patients safe from preventable harm and medical errors.

Closing 2023, MH completed its \$1.2M Wound Care construction project. The service is expected to open in spring 2024. Additionally, MH recognized the Massena Free Clinic with a Community Service Award for the endless ways it enhances healthcare throughout the region.

Foundation:

The St. Lawrence Health Foundation began the public phase of the Great Care, Right Here Fundraising Campaign with a Kick-Off Gala that raised more than \$155,000 to support the priorities of the Campaign. Proceeds from the event

will support the construction of the Regional Care Pavilion, the establishment of the Family Medicine Rural Residency Program, and scholarships to support employees pursuing further education.

In addition to significant support from individuals, nearly \$13.5M in grant funding was approved, including two NYS DOH Statewide Facility Transformation Grants; \$7M is earmarked for an Obstetrics Expansion project to help alleviate barriers in accessing healthcare services for pregnant and postpartum women; and an additional \$3 million in grant funding was realized for the construction of a Rural Family Medicine Residency facility. The three-year Rural Family Medicine Residency Program will prepare residents with training and experience required of primary care providers and ultimately help address the shortage of providers in rural healthcare settings.

Grant funding of \$750,000 over the course of five years was awarded to partner with NYS Department of Health and the North Country Prenatal and Perinatal Council on a Universal Maternal Health Light Touch Program, and to assist in the reduction of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity. As part of SLH's rural health strategy, CPH is developing a Maternal Outreach Program to assist the un- and under-insured Medicaid population that will address barriers to care, including behavioral healthcare. Funding will support patient navigation, telehealth resources, and new mom education.

Additionally \$1.5M in funding from NYS OASAS was realized to stand up a Comprehensive LowThreshold Buprenorphine Services program to help in addressing the opioid epidemic and enhance access to those needing help for substance use disorders.

"Steadfast in our vision for a Rural Health Center of Excellence, our team of professionals remain hyper-focused on continually improving how quality care is accessed and delivered, especially within our unique and challenging rural environment. We are devoted to being of service and offering the essential care our communities need and deserve," noted SLH President Donna McGregor.

To learn more about St. Lawrence Health, visit www.stlawrencehealthsystem.org.



The New York Power Authority is giving interns a taste of real-world scenarios as part of its Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) initiative. Photo courtesy of NYPA

Paid NYPA internships aim to prepare students for utility careers

By BOB BECKSTEAD
bbeckstead@wdt.net

This article appeared in the February edition of NNY Business.

WHITE PLAINS — The New York Power Authority is giving interns a taste of real-world scenarios as part of its Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) initiative.

"Last summer we had 40 paid interns, increasing the total number of interns to 82 since the program began in 2021," Environmental Justice Manager Alexandra DeRosa told NYPA trustees this week.

She said the goal of the program is to prepare students for utility careers "and align their studies with energy industry skills sets, something that we're very proud of."

"We were able to accomplish for the first time last year offering industry certifications as part of the internship program. We had about two dozen interns who

earned energy auditing certifications or HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) and CLT (Certified Logistics Technician) certifications, and we had interns that received pilot certifications or FAA 107 (drone license certification)," DeRosa said.

"For us this is a great step in expanding the workplace experience that we work really hard to tailor for these students to give them the best six-week internship possible."

She said they stay in touch with many of the interns via Linked In or through texts or emails, and learn how some of them have advanced their careers in the workforce. Among them, she said, was one who was hired as an assistant system operator at the Clark Energy Center. Two others were hired as energy auditors, and another was hired at Con Edison.

"It's really exciting for us to be able to work

with our stakeholders in a way that's translating into new careers. Having such an impact has been really rewarding for our team," DeRosa said.

She said they'll be hosting 50 interns this summer.

"We're increasing the number a little bit," she said.

Those interns will be working with cybersecurity.

"Those are the glamorous projects. They get to fly drones and get to work on cybersecurity projects. This is how we can draw interns into the program and make it as appealing to the youth," DeRosa said.

A junior fellowship program that they're launching in the fall will give P-Tech students an opportunity to engage in a paid year-long energy-related research project.

"That will be new for us," she said. "This is a way that we can engage with younger students and give them workplace

experience opportunities."

The Power Authority offers six-week paid internships to dozens of P-TECH scholars from disadvantaged communities near NYPA generation and transmission assets. Interns spend most of their time working alongside their peers and NYPA employees contributing directly to real projects that further New York state's clean energy goals.

In addition to the hands-on, technical projects, interns receive one-to-one mentorship, a full day each week devoted to financial literacy, introductions to NYPA staff across different departments, and professionalism and "soft skills" learning, led by Follow Us To Success, a national firm with an emphasis on helping underserved student populations from urban and rural backgrounds to close the post-secondary achievement gap.

Bloom: Women's professional development conference March 15

The Greater Watertown - North Country Chamber of Commerce (GWNC Chamber) is excited to announce the return of Bloom: Women's Professional Development Conference, in partnership with Developing with Devan. Join like-hearted women on March 15, 2024, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Watertown to connect and grow in all new ways!

Bloom offers a tailored platform for women to learn, relate, and empower one another, fostering personal and professional growth in a supportive and inclusive environment. Kayla Jamieson, President & CEO said, "To bloom is to become your best self. You will leave this conference with motivation, inspiration, and genuine connections that will help achieve your goals. Our shared community is a better place when women lift each other up so that we all may reach our full leadership potential, no matter your title."

This is the second year the program will be in Watertown. A participant at

the 2023 event, Suzie Renzi-Falge, said the conference was "An amazing event for those truly passionate about women in leadership and women becoming community leaders. All the breakout sessions I attended had insightful, empowering, and current information from some of the best community leaders. From panel discussions to motivational speakers, there was something for everyone. Bloom was truly inspirational and thoughtfully put together. I'm looking forward to the next one!"

Featuring eight speakers from across New York State, enjoy interactive sessions to explore themes of resilience, goal alignment, entrepreneurship, and balance. Participate in key discussions on community building, effective communication and learn tangible networking skills to start utilizing right away.

Join Sweet Hello Bridal shop owner, Katie Paunzio, in a workshop titled "Going For It: Understanding Your Why + The Business Opportunity." Build resiliency in the "Bloom Beyond Barriers"

workshop with Barb Perez, Thousand Islands Area Habitat for Humanity, Executive Director. Learn from the Obi Wan Kenobi of Networking, Christine Smith, on how to change your networking perspective and build a supportive community. Communicate better with "Effective Writing and Editing for Clarity" workshop led by Meredith Taylor. Go beyond traditional goal setting and map out your vision with Devan Robinson, Founder of Developing with Devan. Build Your Path Founder, Barb Stone coaches how to "Play Your Bigger Game." Our community is changed with one connection at a time. Be part of the keynote "Together We Bloom" with Kayla Jamieson and Devan Robinson.

For full conference details and to sign up for Bloom, visit www.watertownny.com and follow us on Facebook and Instagram @gwnccchamber for updates.

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Jefferson Community College, Watertown. Watertown Daily Times

Financial aid now applicable to certain microcredentials at JCC

By PAMELA J. DIXON
Jefferson Community College

This story appeared in the February edition of NNY Business.

Financial aid is now available for students seeking certain microcredentials from Jefferson Community College (JCC) thanks to New York State expanding eligibility of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). This marks a new milestone in New York State's 50-year-old financial assistance program! Under the new eligibility guidelines, students seeking a microcredential who register for courses totaling 11 credits or less may apply for TAP.

Applicable microcredentials at JCC include Agribusiness and Hospitality, Business Leadership, Direct Support Professional I, Healthcare Management I and II, Hospitality, Kitchen Basics, Non-Profit Leadership, Software Development, and Teaching Assistant Level II. These microcredentials are tailored to support individuals aiming for career advancement, skill enhancement, or a career transition. Each microcredential comprises three to four industry-specific courses totaling

ten credits or less.

SUNY Chancellor John B. King, Jr., says, "The expansion of the Tuition Assistance Program is crucial to help more New Yorkers get the education and training they need to qualify for high-growth careers. There is a place at SUNY for every New Yorker, and we are proud to support students pursuing careers in high demand, growing fields on their path to upward mobility and, hopefully, ultimately earning a college degree."

College President Daniel J. Dupee, II, says, "This is exciting news for our students and community. For many, earning a microcredential is the first step to a well-paying job or new career. By expanding TAP to include microcredentials, NYS has made education even more affordable, empowering individuals to access coursework tailored to their current needs or future goals, ultimately resulting in a more skilled workforce for North Country employers."

Robyn M. Rhyner, Director of Financial Aid at JCC, says, "We

welcome the expansion of state aid to support students pursuing microcredentials. This represents a pivotal step in acknowledging the diverse educational needs of our community and empowering individuals to enhance their skills and expertise."

Notably, some microcredentials may be completed in as little as 15 weeks, and credit earned to fulfill a microcredential is transferable to an associate degree program later. Upon successful completion of microcredentials, students receive a digital badge to display on professional networking platforms like LinkedIn, as well as inclusion on electronic resumes, to share with current and prospective employers.

For more information about applying for the NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) Non-degree Part-time TAP Program, visit the NYS HESC website at <https://shorturl.at/beU79>. To learn more about JCC's microcredentials visit www.sunyjefferson.edu/JCCmicrocredentials or call Enrollment Services at (315) 786-2437.

Jeremy Thompson elected president of surveyors association

The New York State Association of Professional Land Surveyors (NYSAPLS) in January recognized Jeremy E. Thompson, of Oswegatchie, as president of the association for the 2024-2025 term at their annual conference after announcing his appointment at the end of 2023.

"I am thrilled to welcome Jeremy Thompson, LS as president of the association. Jeremy has been a longtime engaging and supportive member of NYSAPLS. He has played an integral role in promoting surveying education and uplifting the next generation of surveyors. I look forward to supporting his efforts as he leads the organization in the new year," said Amber Carpenter, Managing Director of NYSAPLS.

Jeremy has played an active role in NYSAPLS over the years, including serving as the immediate past Executive Vice President for NYSAPLS (2022-2023), and Treasurer (2018-2021). In addition, he is currently a member on the Education Committee and Director for the Black River Valley Association of Professional Land Surveyors (BRVAPLS). Jeremy is a surveying instructor at The Ranger School in Wanakena. Prior to accepting the position at the Ranger School, Jeremy worked for LaFave, White & McGivern, L.S., P.C. (LWM) out of their Theresa office for almost 20 years. During his time at LWM, Jeremy worked his way from a field technician, into the office, and ultimately became licensed in 2007, at which time he took over the position of surveying supervisor for LWM. Along with his professional endeavors, Jeremy is actively involved in his local community.

"I am excited to be taking on this new role as president of the association as we help to advance the industry and guide the next generation of surveyors," said Jeremy E. Thompson, newly elected president of NYSAPLS.

Other newly elected

officers of New York State Association Professional Land Surveying are:

- Steven J. Willard, LS, Executive Vice President
- Scott A. Gillis, LS, Vice President
- Scott B. Allen, LS, Treasurer
- William R. Eggers, LS, Secretary
- Daniel E. Marvin, LS, Executive Director

About New York State Association of Professional Land Surveyors (NYSAPLS)

Founded in 1963 as a membership corporation, the New York State Association of Professional Land Surveyors (NYSAPLS) represents over 1,200 members throughout the State of New York and is recognized as the unified voice of the New York surveying profession. NYSAPLS is comprised of 18 regional affiliated organizations and is an affiliate of the National Society of Professional Surveyors.

Headquartered in Albany, the primary focus of NYSAPLS is to foster the establishment and maintenance of uniform high professional standards of work and ethics in the practice of the profession of land surveying; to promote and enhance the profession through its government affairs program, to educate the public about the role and responsibilities of the professional surveyor; and to provide quality professional development opportunities to the land surveying community, ultimately ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

Additionally, NYSAPLS provides resources to assist consumers, including an online listing of member licensed land surveyors which may be sorted by county or alphabetically. Other valuable public information may be found on this site including a brochure outlining the services that may be offered by a professional land surveyor.

To learn more about NYSAPLS and the land surveying profession, please visit their website and follow them on Twitter and Facebook.

NNY Community Foundation grant opportunities for Q2

WATERTOWN — The Northern New York Community Foundation is pleased to announce a series of funding opportunities now open for nonprofit organizations serving at least seven different communities in Jefferson and Lewis counties.

The deadline to apply for each of the following grant opportunities is Friday, April 19:

Kenneth V. and Jeannette Remp Sawyer Community Fund — Support for programs, projects and initiatives that enhance the quality of life for residents of all ages in the Boonville, Constableville, and Westernville communities. Up to \$60,000 is available this year.

Orchestral Fund — Support for live orchestral performances in the Watertown area. Eligible nonprofit organizations are required to have at least 20 performers in the group with an instrumental component. Up to \$25,000 is available this year.

George R. Davis Fund for Lowville — Support for programs, projects and initiatives that impact the quality of life for residents in the Village and Town of Lowville. Up to

\$15,000 is available this year.

Carolyn Whitney Fund — Support for tree planting projects in the City of Watertown. Up to \$4,500 is available this year.

The Lighthouse Fund — Support to nonprofit organizations providing services to disadvantaged and vulnerable populations in the Cape Vincent and Clayton communities. Up to \$2,000 is available this year.

Applications for each grant opportunity are available through the Community Foundation's Grant Lifecycle Manager (GLM) system, which may be accessed at nnycf.org/grants.

The online portal allows nonprofits to create an organization user profile and apply for active grant opportunities. The Foundation encourages nonprofits to set up a single user account for their organization. The portal features a simple interface that guides users through step-by-step instructions on how to apply. Resources are available on the Foundation's website and on the portal's log-in page to learn more about the process.

To be eligible for Community Foundation grants, nonprofits must be classified as a 501(c)(3) organization by the IRS. Other entities may be eligible depending on the request.

Other open grant opportunities also include the Community Foundation's general grant program and its Jefferson Economic Development Fund. Applications for each are accepted on a rolling basis. Any organization seeking support from either of these programs should contact Max DelSignore, Community Foundation assistant director at max@nnycf.org before beginning an application in the GLM portal.

In addition to its general grant program, the Community Foundation stewards close to 20 different funding opportunities available to nonprofit organizations located in Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties. To learn more about these opportunities, please visit nnycf.org or contact the Foundation at 315-782-7110.



Jeremy Thompson. Contributed.

Augustinian Academy Personalized Nutrition rich in tradition of excellence for a Healthier Life

Nestled in the center of Carthage, Augustinian Academy proudly stands as a shining symbol of academic excellence for students from PreK to 8th grade. Serving the communities of Fort Drum, Copenhagen, Lowville, Beaver Falls, and their surrounding areas, the Academy is steeped in rich tradition and committed to an unwavering dedication to faith, service, and academic achievement. Nurturing an environment of familial warmth, Augustinian Academy boasts small class sizes and a committed staff. The school's holistic approach to education focuses on the academic, physical, and spiritual development of each child.



Founded in 1885 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Augustinian Academy has been a favorable choice for parents seeking a private education for their children. Beyond its role in shaping young minds, the Academy is deeply

committed to community service. This fall students and families actively contributed to several charitable efforts. A substantial collection of food and hygiene goods was collected in an effort to replenish the church food pantry, which serves families in the Carthage community. Likewise, a school-wide sock drive proved to be highly successful. Organizer Michelle Martin had this to say about the sock drive, "It's a way for the school, church, and community to give back to those in need. We collected 427 pairs. It may seem simple, but even the smallest acts of kindness can have

See **ACADEMY B7**

Dietitians of Northern New York offer personalized nutrition services to embark on a healthier life. Owned and operated by Etosha Farmer, MS, RDN, CDCES, works as your personal dietary coach to help empower you to make better choices and show you exactly how to achieve your nutrition goals. She works by coaching you along your journey; forming a plan that you are comfortable with, following up with you, making changes to your plan as needed and providing support and encouragement along the way! Whether you are looking to lose weight, feel more energized, prevent diseases, or just eat healthier they can help! Their focus is on food and how to incorporate the foods you love into a healthy lifestyle.

Dietitians of Northern New York utilize Medical Nutrition Therapy to provide an evidence-based approach that works. They can help you with weight management or with specific disease states such as diabetes, chronic kidney disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol/Heart disease, GI and digestive disorders, disordered eating, food allergies



and intolerances and PCOS. Examples of services provided include individual dietary coaching, group education classes, weight-loss support groups, grocery store tours (individual or group), meal planning, menu and recipe development and analysis, and nutrition presentations.

Healthy lifestyles have become an important part of today's healthcare treatment. Many insurance

plans will cover aspects of nutrition counseling, weight-loss programs etc. Dietitians of NNY accepts most insurances and will work with your insurance company on billing.

Stop by at their Watertown office - 415 Sherman Street, Watertown. For more information on how they can help you start a healthier lifestyle call 315-221-4881 or visit <https://dietitiansofnny.com/>.

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Oswegatchie- A Four Season Facility with Opportunity for All

Since 1946, the New York FFA has called a portion of Lewis County their home.

Meandering down one of the prettiest roads in the county, Oswegatchie Educational Center sits on the banks of the Oswegatchie River along Long Pond Road in the town of Croghan. Often considered the best kept secret of the North Country, Oswegatchie is owned and operated by the New York FFA Foundation. More than 11,500 NY FFA members consider this their piece of the Adirondack Park.

Oswegatchie was originally purchased by the FFA in 1946, for the sole purpose of operating a summer leadership camp for FFA members. Over the years the program and facilities have evolved in response to interest and growth from FFA members across NY. In addition to six weeks of

summer camp, Oswegatchie provides seasonal program offerings to student, family, and adult groups looking for a different experience. Leadership development using our outdoor based team challenge program built amongst our majestic red and white pines, environmental education offerings, and outdoor recreation experiences provide our clients with learning experiences that are fun and encourage inquisitive exploration.

Oswegatchie is also home to some great annual events open to the public. This past January we hosted our fourth annual twilight snowshoe & pancake supper, an event created out of COVID. Considered a favorite annual event in the county, we host our 30th Anniversary AdironDuck Race and Pancake breakfast on April 28. New this year, we are hosting the public for the Total Eclipse event on April 8. Eclipse fans are invited to join us for a day of hikes, a meal, and witness a rare astronomical event. You can stay informed about Oswegatchie by following our Facebook page, or by going to www.oswegatchie.org. We invite educators, groups organizers,

churches, and businesses looking for a retreat to call our offices at 315-346-1222 if you would like to book a group program.

We are proud to be a part of the Lewis County community. We hope to see all our friends and supporters this year at Oswegatchie.

###

The New York Leadership Training Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c) 3 charitable organization whose primary mission is to coordinate sustainable, long-term funding for agricultural education and the New York FFA. We accomplish this mission by offering engagement opportunities to our alumni, donors, and sponsors throughout the year.

If you would like to learn more about the New York FFA Foundation, Oswegatchie Educational Center, and the many year-round opportunities available to your group or organization, please visit www.nyffafoundation.org or contact:

Todd Lighthall, Executive Director
NY FFA Foundation, Inc.
9340 Long Pond Road
Croghan, NY 13327
(315) 346-1222
tlighthall@oswegatchie.org

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Fuller Insurance Agency, Inc. is an independent insurance agency offering all types of insurance from auto, property and life to all types of clients including individuals, businesses, not-for-profits and public entities.

The second generation agency has been serving clients throughout Northern New York for over 43 years. Wilfred T. "Bill" Fuller founded the agency on State Street in Carthage in September, 1980. While many things have changed since 1980, the agency remains committed to providing local service with local knowledge.

Adam Fuller commented on the current state of insurance. "Insurance, particularly auto insurance, is in a tough spot as

we come out of the pandemic. We call it a hard market. Insurance companies are taking rate increases, non-renewing policies and some are even ceasing to write new business." He added, "more than ever, having a local independent insurance agent is important, especially one who provides local service with local knowledge, to help you navigate during turbulent times."

Fuller Insurance Agency also proudly represents Erie Insurance in New York. Erie Insurance (Erie, PA and Rochester, NY) offers a full line of property/casualty insurance products including auto and homeowners insurance as well as commercial insurance. Adam Fuller, agency

principal, said "we're extremely proud and honored to represent Erie Insurance. We both share similar values and a commitment to service for our clients."

In addition to Erie Insurance, Fuller Insurance Agency represents numerous other national and regional carriers plus access to specialty insurance programs. For a full list of insurance carriers and programs, please visit <https://www.fullerinsuranceagency.com/partners.html>.

Aaron Fuller, agency principal, added "being an independent agent means we have choices for our clients. Today, that means offering service in-person, phone, email, text or on our agency's consumer



portal app." Fuller Insurance Agency, Inc. is located at 110 S. School Street, Carthage and at 10 Court Street,

Canton The agency has seven staff members who share over 100 years of combined insurance experience. They can be

contacted in Carthage at 315.493.2110 or in Canton at 315.386.3403 or visit them on the web: www.fullerinsuranceagency.com.

Zehr's Flowers ready to go in 2024

The team at Zehr's Flowers and Landscaping are hard at work right now gearing up for a busy 2024. The commercial estimators are in full swing bidding and lining up jobs so when Spring comes, we are ready for "go time." Beside them, our office staff have also been busy executing

contracts and tying up all the loose ends. We also have many employees working hard on getting their CDL's for the larger equipment.

We are excited to serve you as we go into our 22nd year of business! We are honored to be a part of this awesome community, we

all call home!

It takes a lot to win at business; it takes even more to continue to win, year after year. I believe that the future is bright in the green industry and I'm excited to see the PROGRESS, in 2024 here at Zehr's!

Samantha L. Widrick

Academy

From B6

a huge impact." Socks were donated to our local Village Ecumenical Ministry (VEM) and were handed out during the VEM's winter sharing events. Staff and students at Augustinian Academy remain committed to seeking opportunities that embody Christ through selfless giving.

The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation Grant has further empowered Augustinian Academy to offer a diverse range of programs to area students, extending the benefits to the broader community. Augustinian Academy offered a free week-long STEM camp and week-long Vacation Bible School last summer exemplifying their commitment to community outreach. 78 students from Carthage and the surrounding area benefited from last summer's camps.

As the Academy gears up for its 20th annual Gala, a luau theme titled, "Hula in the Snow," it reflects on the vision of its late principal, Sister John Mary Brockway.



Sister John Mary envisioned the event as not only a fundraiser for the school, but also a gathering of the community in the winter months to lift spirits. This event, a lively mix of dinner, silent auction, live entertainment, and more is made possible by the generous support of community sponsors. Special appreciation is extended to this year's top sponsors: Carthage Area Hospital, The Knights of Columbus- Father John J. Cosmic Council 291, Fuller Insurance Agency, Robert Sligar-CrossCountry Mortgage, LLC and Iseneker Funeral Home.

While the Gala is a significant community event, the St. James Fair stands out as Augustinian Academy's largest fundraiser. Anticipated by the community each



summer, the fair will celebrate its 50th year this summer. Bigger and better than ever, special plans are in the works for this hallmark anniversary. With a variety of foods including traditional and ethnic cuisines, games, live music, and carnival attractions, the fair is a cherished tradition that unites the community. Save the date for the 50th St. James Fair, to be held June 20-22 promising another year of joy, connection, and support for Augustinian Academy's mission in the North Country.

For more information about enrolling your child in Augustinian Academy, please visit www.c-augustinian.org or call 315-493-1301 to schedule a school tour.

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State and village pave way for opening of cannabis shop in village



Brandon A. Blount of Carthage, owner of Black River Cannabis Company LLC, stands in front of his shop on Bridge Street, West Carthage. Elaine M. Avallone/Johnson Newspapers Corp

By Elaine M. Avallone
eavallone@lowville.com

Originally published Oct. 11, 2023

WEST CARTHAGE — When the recreational cannabis prohibition in New York state ended in March 2021, municipalities were given the option to opt out of allowing dispensaries by passing a local law. In doing so, the municipalities would forego tax revenue generated from shops within their boundaries.

At that time, the West Carthage village board decided to opt in, allowing adult marijuana-oriented businesses. When the matter was discussed at the December 2021 monthly meeting, Mayor Scott M. Burto said he had received many comments on the topic which mostly were positive.

According to the minutes of that meeting, the mayor pointed out that, the dispensaries will be regulated by zoning and local laws. The right to consume cannabis was now legal in New York State and more than 70% of the communities have not opted out, including the village of Carthage. In addition, he said the community would benefit from the extra sales tax. Another pro for allowing a dispensary was that quality of cannabis purchased from the dispensary would be safer since the product is heavily regulated by New York state Department of Health.

"The benefits outweigh the cons for our community," he concluded.

Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act provision allows adult marijuana-oriented businesses like dispensaries, cafes and bars to open in the town. The law created the Office of Cannabis Management, which is governed by a Cannabis Control Board similar to the state Liquor Authority under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law. The OCM is responsible for issuing retail licenses and developing additional business regulations.

In addition municipalities had the opportunity to provide local laws and zoning codes to further regulate such businesses.

In August, the village board passed a local law limiting operation to the business districts and arterial district while also setting hours of operation.

During the public hearing on the matter, several people spoke in favor of allowing a cannabis shop in the village

including Brandon A. Blount of Carthage, owner of Black River Cannabis Company LLC, who last week opened his accessory retail shop on Bridge Street. He was also granted a special use permit for a cannabis showcase in his shop six days a week. Wednesday through Sunday. There will be three different growers till January 2024 when Mr. Blount is expected get the state's full approval.

According to the meeting minutes, Jennifer Waite spoke in favor of allowing the business since it is a retail shop not a cafe-type business where produce would be consumed. She pointed out that there are three bars on the Bridge Street block.

Village Police Officer in Charge David Pustizzi voiced concerns about the possible need for more parking.

A disabled veteran spoke in favor of the new business, noting cannabis was a safer alternative for pain management than opioids.

Steven Anderson said providing regulated produce will help to decrease the use of bad drugs, so he was in support off the shop coming to West Carthage.

Travis Barkey is in support of having a shop close to home and he feels like the tax revenue would be great for the village.

Thomas Valentine, village planning board chair, also had concerns about traffic and parking. He also noted there should be better signage for the crosswalk which the mayor would bring to the attention of the Department of Transportation.

Mark Spencer voiced concerns about the negative effects on children in the area especially since the shop is next to a dance studio.

"People are going to buy and use cannabis through the state regardless if a municipality allows dispensaries," said Mayor Burto via email after the passing of the local law. "By allowing the dispensary the village will have the opportunity to collect sales tax and the additional 3% tax on the cannabis sales."

Mr. Blount's shop, which opened last week at 15 Bridge St., is a CBD/hemp/smoking accessory retail boutique.

Currently, it is not a dispensary for THC cannabis, or THC based cannabinoids.

"We are hoping to become a fully NYS

licensed dispensary," the shop owner said. "The state has set certain mandates, acceptations and exceptions to becoming a licensed dispensary. As outlined by the Cannabis Control Board, and Office of Cannabis Management, we must first apply via the state's business enterprise website, The initial application fee is \$1,000, unless you are a social economic equity qualifying applicant which reduces that fee by 50%. If you receive a license approval the fee is \$7,000 to obtain it. You really need to have all of your ducks in a row, and have all the documentation that the state requires of the applicants. From there, it's really a waiting game."

Mr. Blount said he decided to open a shop in West Carthage for several reasons.

"We are local and live in this community, and growing up in a small town has instilled small town community values in me," he said, noting he moved here in 2019. "The north country has always felt like home to me."

When the state legalized cannabis, Mr. Blount saw the need for providers in the area.

"The challenges are many, the red tape is a lot, but at the end of the day, we want to be here to serve the Carthage area as well as the north country," he said.

Until the Adult Use Dispensary license comes through he is limited on marketing and advertising thus has relied on word of mouth.

"I will honestly say that 98% of our customers are wanting State Authorized Legal Cannabis Products," Mr. Blount said. "Which we knew would be the case when we opened our doors. It's the reason we set up the shop according to the state required regulations to be a turn key operation to be able to be ready when - if we receive license approval."

As was approved by the village board, he is currently working with several local northern New York licensed cultivators who received certification to bring a state licensed Cannabis Grower's Showcase in house in the interim while awaiting the state to process the license applications.

"While we have no financial gain or financial interest in the grower's showcase, we are providing a space for them, and at the same time providing those of 21 years of age or older within the

community with products they are interested in purchasing/consuming," the shop owner said.

Once fully licensed, Mr. Blount plans to hire a full staff of five to 10 employees to manage and operate the company. Potentially he also hopes to branch out, if the state does allow adult use dispensaries to have additional as well as on-site consumption site licenses.

"As with any business, it's kind of a wait and see game, the laws are always changing, the regulations are always in flux, and the market is always shifting," the businessman said. "Our biggest hurdle at this point is making it through the state licensing process, and then working to make sure our business model is sustainable over the long term. A sustainable model requires eventually hiring employees who are dedicated and willing to provide the level of quality service standards we as members of the community want to see. At the end of the day, our success is community success. The taxes received from sales will go to improve the community, and we plan on donating where we can and are allowed to community programs and events. Our goal is to be part of the community, not apart from it. We live here. We are just like anyone else within the community, and we want to see positive things happen, and if we can be part of that, it's all the better for everyone."

Mayor Burto plans to use some of the funds gained from sales to establish youth awareness and prevention programs.

"This would include the opportunity to bring back the D.A.R.E program in our schools," he said. "Without a legally licensed operating dispensary we would still have the potential use throughout our village without the tax revenue to provide extra programming and awareness. With so many overdoses in the area with laced products this also provides local residents the opportunity to purchase a safe, tested and regulated product. We have also had a lot of positive feedback from veterans and elderly people in our community that have medical cannabis cards. Providing a point of sale locally will eliminate the need to travel monthly to Liverpool or Plattsburgh especially in the winter months."



Jefferson Community College on Coffeen Street in Watertown has been again recognized as a "Best for Vets" college by Military Times. The school has been cited in the publication's annual survey each year since 2017. Watertown Daily Times

JCC continues to rank among Military Times' Best for Vets Colleges

By Pamela J. Dixon

Jefferson Community College

Jefferson Community College (JCC) has once again been recognized as a top choice for veterans, earning the prestigious "Best for Vets" college designation by Military Times. This distinction marks a consistent recognition for the College, a title it has proudly held since 2017.

"It is truly a privilege to support our nation's veterans in their educational journey," said Dr. Daniel J. Dupee, II, President. "Our staff, many of whom are veterans or military spouses, are dedicated to providing exceptional support to those transitioning back to civilian life and preparing for employment following their military career. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve those who have served and appreciate Military Times' recognition of our strong commitment to the military community here in the North Country and beyond."

"We're immensely proud to receive the Best for Vets college designation by Military Times, reaffirming our dedication to supporting veteran students in achieving their academic goals," said Clarissa Pol, Veteran Services Educational Planner. "Veterans bring valuable skills and experiences to our workforce, and through our assessment of prior learning upon enrollment, we ensure



they can seamlessly integrate their expertise into their education and future careers."

For more than a decade, Military

Times has conducted an extensive, editorially independent, objective study evaluating the many factors that help make colleges and universities a good fit

for service members, military veterans and their families. The most significant weighting metrics determining the relative ranking of schools in the 2023 survey were student success factors (completion rates, retention rates, persistence, GPA, and graduation rates), followed closely by the range of military-specific resources and the level of financial assistance offered. Admissions and registration policies, human resources and assorted miscellaneous considerations also factor into the scoring rubric. Each school's participation is voluntary.

The Best for Vets: Colleges 2023 ranks are available online at <https://bestforvets.militarytimes.com/>.

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Second forum set for comprehensive plan for Wilna, Carthage and Deferiet



Christopher Barboza, planner for the Tug Hill Commission, directed a SWOT exercise for the town of Wilna and villages of Deferiet and Carthage comprehensive plan. Elaine M. Avallone/ Johnson Newspapers

By Elaine M. Avallone

eavallone@lowville.com
Originally published Jan. 25 in Watertown Daily Times

CARTHAGE — In a joint effort, the town of Wilna and villages of Deferiet and Carthage are developing a comprehensive plan with guidance from Christopher Barboza, planner for the Tug Hill Commission.

Comprehensive plans provide guidance for the immediate and long-range protection and enhancement of community assets, as well as to provide for orderly growth and development of the community. The document defines a community's vision and acts as a guide for land use decisions and helps officials prioritize decisions and investments.

About a dozen attended the first public session Jan. 23 to gain input for the plan. The group brainstormed on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats — SWOT — associated with the

communities.

Strengths mentioned included the small town atmosphere where people are there for others in time of need along with an active Chamber of Commerce and good municipal services from fire service to a sound and reliable water supply.

Among the weaknesses mentioned were youth retention, limited broadband, poor code enforcement leading to blight.

Opportunities included the use of part of Carthage Park for camping, more cooperative efforts and reuse of the Deferiet paper mill property.

Things such as Fort Drum fell under threats for the possibility of a terrorist attack as well as a strength for the people it brings to the area. Vacant building along with the possibility of the West Street hospital closing when the new main campus is constructed was also listed as a threat.

There will be another

session aimed at business owners, however all are welcome. The forum is set for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 30, at the Carthage Elks Lodge, 511 Fulton St.

The committee tasked with developing the draft comprehensive plan meets at 3 p.m. the third Tuesday of the month in the town of Wilna municipal building, 414 State St. Committee members include chair Lori Borland, Ernest Prieto, Teri Ellis, John Trowbridge, Jon Storms, Shari Gerber, Sarah Bullock, Carol Kessler and from the Tug Hill Commission, Mr. Barboza, Mickey Dietrich, Matt Smith and Matt Johnson. The public is welcome to attend the meetings.

The committee will utilize the information gathered at the two public sessions to formulate questions for a survey which will be sent to residents. The results of which will be help guide the creation of the comprehensive plan.

General Services: Rails to Trails master plan, highway infrastructure funding on agenda

By Elaine M. Avallone

eavallone@lowville.com

Originally published Jan. 25

LOWVILLE — The Lewis County Legislature's General Services Committee will be dealing with finishing up projects and holding ribbon cuttings and staying the course with recreational programs this year.

The committee approved its 2024-25 goals during the Jan. 11 meeting, which now along with

a resolution will go before the entire board at the February meeting.

Presented by county manager Ryan M. Piche, it was proposed that the EMS ad hoc committee continue its work that includes the launching of a BOCES EMS program in the fall, work with state expert Brad Pinsky on local innovations to compensate volunteers and to work on strategies to push forward statewide

regulatory changes to enhance local EMS services.

The committee will continue to execute the courthouse renovation project which will involve changes to the building's layout including moving various department offices. There will also be the need for advance engineering work to prepare for HVAC to be bid out end of year.

Piche pointed out the "project is price dependent."

Another goal was to complete the Board of Elections and Outdoor Services renovation projects that were part of the capital project.

The county manager said the Board of Elections was making the move to the newly renovated Department of Motor Vehicles building on East State Street.

Once the renovations are completed at the Outdoor Services Building, which formerly was the county Highway Department offices on East Road, the Recreation, Forestry and Parks along with the Soil and Water offices will be moved. Once completed the projects will be closed out and ribbon cuttings planned.

The department is working to open Singing Waters Park on Fish Creek Road between Lyons Falls and Glenfield in the town of Greig. The park was established in 1957 with a large picnic area, overnight camping and a small wooden bath house.

The Department of Health requires the park to have potable water system. Piche said this project will be bid out and then landscaping can be completed and a grand opening held.

The committee seeks to develop a Rails to Trails master plan by the end of 2024, which would be geared toward future grant funding projects.

"This is one of most important initiatives," Piche said. "There's a lot of public interest in this project." He suggested the committee prioritize engaging with public and municipal partners, host community engagement events and leverage the expertise of Alta Planning and Design consultants who have completed many rail-trail projects.

The committee will also continue ATV lobbying efforts by supporting ATV bills introduced

during 2024 legislative session; travel to Albany to meet with state lawmakers to advance issues and to engage with regional and statewide partners. Piche said there has already been legislation proposed concerning electrified ATVs.

Another project to be completed will be the Glenfield Complete Streets which involves new asphalt, sidewalks, curbs and storm drainage in hamlet.

Piche pointed out the project is pretty substantial.

"It's the first time the county has taken full responsibility for full highway right away inside a village or hamlet," he said. "Typically we would just repave and leave the storm drainage, curbs sidewalks up to the town or village. We're stepping up. We'll see how it goes. If goes well, then hopefully we'll do the same in Constableville, Turin, Beaver Falls some of the other places we have county roads."

Another goal is to study strategies to maximize state and federal funding for highway infrastructure.

"It's a good year to be thinking about this kind of stuff, because snow and ice agreements with the towns is up at the end of the year, so we're going to need to be in negotiations with the towns at some point this year anyway," he said.

He informed the committee that last year the county highway department gave a presentation on bridges and how town bridge projects are falling behind.

Piche noted that the county has started helping towns with Bridge NY funding applications and suggested the county could continue to lend expertise and staff to maximize the resources available.

Once again the committee will review and revise junkyard

local law.

To support these goals, the General Services Committee will propose the following resolutions for approval by the Lewis County Board of Legislators during its February meeting.

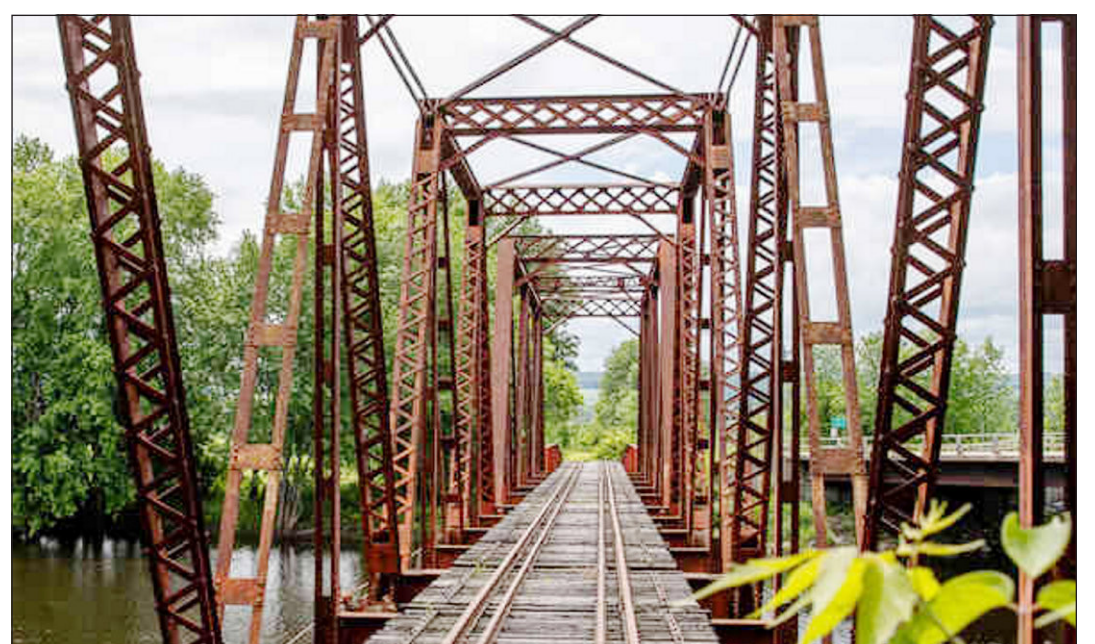
n Bills to amend general municipal law to allow volunteer firefighters to receive call stipends and for legislature to extend same to EMS Ambulance volunteers.

n Authorizing supplemental agreement between highway department and CNS Engineers to provide additional engineering services for design and construction phases regarding the bridge replacement project County route 43 over Moose Creek Oct. 18, 2019 - Dec. 31 2025 additional amount not to exceed \$361,000 with 80% eligible for federal funds and 20% non-federal funds for a total cost of \$640,000 to CNS for the project.

n Approve supplemental agreement between NYS Department of Transportation and Lewis County for the design phase for the County Route 43 over Moose Creek project to receive and appropriate an additional \$66,000 in the capital bridge program account.

n Authorizing interfund loan financing and memorandum of understanding between Lewis County and Highway Department for county machinery and equipment funding adopted in the 2024 capital plan in the amount not to exceed \$650,000 to be repaid to the county with no interest by annual installments over a five-year period.

n Set a date for public hearing for an addition of approximately 3.5 miles of off highway vehicle trail to the Lewis County trail system for March 5 at 5 p.m.



The Lewis County Legislature's General Services Committee is planning to develop a Rails to Trails master plan by the end of 2024, which would be geared toward future grant funding projects. Watertown Daily Times

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Lewis County General Hospital surgical pavilion opened

By Elaine M. Avallone

eavallone@lowville.com

Originally published Dec. 6, 2023

LOWVILLE — “Honoring the legacy and building the future,” has been the motto of the Lewis County Health Care System Capital Campaign and that idea was echoed throughout the ribbon cutting event for the new surgical pavilion Nov. 30. From Michael Young, Lewis County Health System Board of Managers president speaking of the history of the project to Gerald R. Cayer, Lewis County Health System Chief Executive Officer making the announcement that the maternity department will reopen in the spring, the event spoke of the idea of moving forward without forgetting the past.

“Today marks another milestone building on the legacy of those in this community who came together in 1931 and who envisioned what this hospital could be then and now 92 years later,” Mr. Young said.

He noted the new state-of-the-art facility was more than just brick and mortar, the doctors, nurses and other staff are the “heartbeat of this institution, here to build on the legacy of our past surgical staff that included surgeons Campbell, Ellison and Herrman.” In addition the new facilities have and will continue to attract medical professionals.

The board president pointed out that Mr. Cayer and county manager Ryan Piche were the “unsung heroes” of the project who turned the dream into a reality going from design to financing to completion.

Mr. Cayer said the surgical facility was envisioned in early 2000s by Dr. John Herrman, John Woods, Charles Truax, Michael Tabolt, and other members of the board of managers and medical staff begin discussions on creating a modern surgical “tower.”

“They understood that the duty of foresight requires boards to stand up for their successors’ futures through intentional learning, short-term sacrifice, and long-term action,” Mr. Cayer said. “They planted the seeds for what would become the surgical pavilion.”

The project was set aside for a time but was reactivated in 2018 and after submitting a certificate of need, the state Department of Health approved the project in 2020. The Board of Legislators supported bonding the project at a time when interest rates were at all time low, said



Health care workers clap during a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Lewis County Health System Surgical Pavilion. Thursday. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times



Stephanie Hunziker, surgical services nurse manager, speaks about the new surgical pavilion in Lowville during a ribbon cutting ceremony, Thursday. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

Mr. Cayer.

The pandemic caused delays and changes to the scope of the project. Ground was broke on April 20, 2022 and the first surgery is scheduled for Dec. 5.

Stephenie Hunziker, surgical services nurse manager, expressed thanks to the hospital administration for supporting the staff by “choosing the very best surgical equipment available today.”

“We were able to partner with the greatest companies that offer technology designed first and foremost for patient safety,” she said. “As a nurse, a manager, a surgical assistant, patient safety is the number one priority. We’ve designed this beautiful building with that in mind.”

To aid financially the USDA Rural

Development provided a \$1 million infrastructure emergency rural health care grant.

Brian Murray, State Director USDA Rural Development, said the local critical access hospital was first in the nation to receive this funding.

He noted healthcare is vital for rural communities not only providing needed medical services but also supports the local economy through good paying jobs and supports a sense of community.

“It is only right for us to fund this project through this grant,” he said. “This is what Rural Development does every single day.”

He noted Rural Development aids with everything from housing to community facilities, to high-speed internet and snowplows.

JoAnne Rhubarb, Lewis County Hospital Foundation executive director, spoke of the fundraising efforts, noting “we are overwhelmed with the support we’ve been getting for this project.”

Mrs. Rhubarb pointed out a symbol of the motto - “honoring the legacy, building on the future” - is in the surgical pavilion’s lobby where an original window from 1931 hospital has been installed.

She noted the fundraising goals have not yet been met.

Mrs. Rhubarb mentioned following the ribbon cutting, that the foundation has \$50,000 matching gift so any new donations will be matched, thus doubling the donation.

To donate or learn more about the campaign, visit the



Gerald R. Cayer, CEO of Lewis County Health System, speaks about the new surgical pavilion in Lowville during a ribbon cutting ceremony, Thursday. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

Dr. Abdelrahman Elgallad, Dr. Mikhail Choubmessenger, Dr. Steven Kaplan and Mrs. Rhubarb.

Mr. Cayer said there will be another ribbon cutting in the spring for the new medical surgical and new critical care unit rooms which should be completed by March 12.

The more than 100 in attendance were invited to tour the new facility which includes three operating rooms and a procedure room which doubles the current surgical capacity. There are also 24 private rooms with private baths “to ensure patient safety and satisfaction and enhance infection prevention measures,” states a press release.

LPN Mckenize Dorrry who works in the ambulatory surgery unit, described the new facility as a “blessing for the community.”

She noted the design creates a better flow.

“Compared with what we have been working with, this is a mansion,” said surgical tech Shania Pierce stationed in front of one of the operating rooms on the tour.

She pointed out the operating room was across the hallway from the maternity unit which would allow, when needed, maternity patients to go directing in to the operating room whereas previously they had to be wheeled through open areas of the hospital.

foundation website at www.lewiscountyhospitalfoundation.org or by calling 315-979-8727.

Prior to the actual ribbon cutting, Mr. Cayer announce that Dr. George Akl will join the Women’s Health Practice and that the hospital is “unpausing” the maternity department and reopening on March 25.

“We are committed to delivering babies at Lewis County General Hospital,” he said.

For the ribbon cutting, Mr. Cayer asked past and present members of the hospital’s Board of Managers, the Board of Legislators and Foundation’s Board of Directors along with the surgical staff to join the ceremony. Cutting the ribbon were Dr. Jon Baker, PA Evan Leibelsperger, Mrs. Hunziker, Mr. Young, Mr. Cayer,

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 <p>2019 CADILLAC XTS 15242. Stellar Black Metallic, 80,784 miles \$22,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2016 CHEVY SILVERADO LT 15060. Siren Red Tintcoat, 134,272 miles \$21,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2016 CHEVROLET TAHOE 15249. Black, 134,040 miles \$24,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2017 CHRYSLER PACIFICA 15292. Velvet Red Pearl Coat, 113,522 miles \$12,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2014 DODGE DURANGO 15229. Brilliant Black Crystal Pearl, 89,503 miles \$17,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>
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 <p>2019 DODGE GRAND CARAVAN 15204. Billet Clear Coat, 83,781 miles \$16,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2013 FIAT 500 15264. Silver, 92,402 miles \$6,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2020 FORD EDGE SEL SUV 15073. Magnetic, 38,183 miles \$25,499 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2017 FORD F-150 XL TRUCK 14740. Oxford White, 99,616 miles \$22,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2018 FORD F-150 XLT TRUCK 15230. Shadow Black, 90,522 miles \$24,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>
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 <p>2018 GMC ACADIA DENALI 15141. White Frost Tricoat, 62,056 miles \$26,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2019 FORD FIESTA SE 15225. White Platinum Metallic, 92,155 miles \$11,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2016 GMC SIERRA 1500 14912. White Frost Tricoat, 101,522 miles \$26,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2020 HONDA CR-V 14990. Crystal Black Pearl, 36,125 miles \$24,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2019 JEEP CHEROKEE SUV 15147. Bright White Clear Coat, 51,255 miles \$19,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>
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 <p>2020 JEEP WRANGLER SUV 15291. Bright White Clear Coat, 82,533 miles \$29,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2020 MITSUBISHI ECLIPSE 15153. Octane Blue Metallic, 44,044 miles \$19,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2020 NISSAN SENTRA SR 15187. Aspen White Tricoat, 58,320 miles \$17,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2019 RAM 1500 REBEL 15209. Flame Red Clear Coat, 116,849 miles \$30,499 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>	 <p>2017 TOYOTA RAV4 15160. Magnetic Gray Metallic, 63,956 miles \$21,999 Plus tax, title & reg.</p>
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PROGRESS

BANKING ON IT

Watertown Savings Bank getting ready to open new lending center



The new bridge that will connect the original building to the new lending center. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

By JONATHON WHEELER
jwheeler@wdt.net

WATERTOWN — Watertown Savings Bank will be entering a new era this spring as the bank plans to open its new lending center next door to its current building on Clinton Street in Watertown.

President and Chief Executive Officer Mark R. Lavarney said the new lending center will open up office space in the current Clinton Street location next door.

The 14,000-square-foot lending center replaced The Clinton Building at 145 Clinton St.

The building itself looks almost identical to its

next door neighbor with a bridge connecting the two.

There will be three entrances, one across from the Watertown Daily Times, one in the middle, and an entrance down closer to the Medical Arts Building. Under the bridge will be an outdoor courtyard meaning people will not be able to drive under the bridge.

That won't be open right away, but construction will be done on the courtyard when the weather allows.

This move will free up space and allow the bank to bring other departments back under the same building at Clinton Street that were moved

because of lack of space. There are currently two or three departments that are in other branches that will be back at the Clinton Street office.

Lavarney said the first floor will have residential and consumer lending and the second floor will be the commercial lending department.

All lenders will move out of the current building and into the new building.

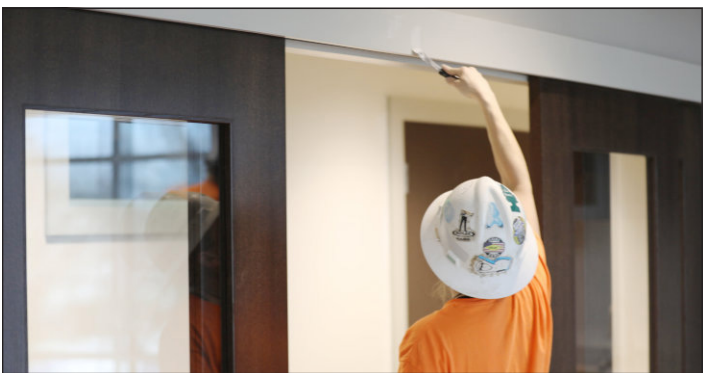
The drive up facility will remain intact across the street.

"The new building will accommodate all of our lending functions and allow for future growth,"

See BANKING C2



Employee for Design Build Innovations, or DBI Billy E. Decilles working inside on the new Watertown Savings Bank lending center on Clinton Street. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



Employee for Design Build Innovations Kate Fuller working inside the new Watertown Savings Bank lending center on Clinton Street. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



Employee for Design Build Innovations, or DBI Billy E. Decilles working inside the new Watertown Savings Bank lending center on Clinton Street. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



From left: Scott M. Pooler, Watertown Savings Bank Executive Vice President and Mark R. Lavarney, President and Chief Executive Officer for Watertown Savings Bank stand on the new bridge that connects the original building on Clinton Street to the new lending center. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



From left: Employees of Design Build Innovations Billy E. Decilles and A.J. Beardmore working at the new Watertown Savings Bank lending center. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

Banking

From C1

Lavarney said.

There will also be a net of two new positions, Lavarney said.

Construction on the new building started late summer 2022, and is expected to open in April.

"We expect in the next 60 days to be occupying the building," Lavarney said.

He also said doing this shows their commitment to the community.

"I think that the community's supported us and we've supported the community and this is just a testament to that growth and our commitment to Jefferson County and this area," he said. "We're committed to being here, this is our hometown. Jefferson County is the only place we've banked for 130 years and this is the next step in our growth."

The bridge that connects the two buildings allows for employees to have one central boardroom, lunch room, and training room, etc.

"The bridge allowed us to achieve the new space, maintain the symmetry of the buildings, and the symmetry of the lot and at the same time keep the connectivity between the two buildings so the employees would feel connected as well," Lavarney said.

Inside the building, there will be some differences as there won't be a teller line, for example.

"Outside, they look very similar, but inside they'll be functionally different," Lavarney said.

Design Build Innovations did the construction.

For Northern Credit Union, advanced stand-alone Advanced ATMs have begun to pop up throughout the north country.

The difference between the Advanced ATM and regular ATMs are that they allow for members at Northern to do just about anything that they would do inside the relationship



The bridge connecting the two Watertown Savings Bank buildings. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

center without leaving their car including paying a loan, withdrawing and depositing money, as well as video assistance during regular business hours for people that may have questions.

These exist in places such as Harrisville, Pulasaki, Alexandria Bay, Dexter, Sackets Harbor, and more.

"All of these have grown well," Bonnie J. Belfield, Vice President of Operations said. "Members are using them, they're utilizing them."

Belfield said when people use the video assist option, that it is just like going into a relationship center.

This is also for the convenience of their members so that they don't have to drive all the way to a relationship center from out of the area.

These are not replacing the relationship centers as people like to come inside the relationship center to bank, Belfield said.

"The relationship centers will never go away," Belfield said. "I think this is just another option for individuals to do their banking."

Belfield also said that they were able to assist members throughout the pandemic because of this new technology.

As far as security for the video assist, Belfield said there is security for the advanced ATMs that are also in Northern.

"We take it very personal on the security side when it comes to member information," Belfield said.

Brittany A. McGrath, operations manager, said one of her favorite parts of the advanced ATMs is that

customers can do things like make loan payments after regular business hours.

"Even if you're on your way home from work and you forgot to make that loan payment on your lunch, you still have that ability to do it through the Advanced ATM as well," she said.

The video assist is just available through regular business hours, but other aspects are open 24/7.

In Carthage, Carthage Savings Bank recently purchased the old Key Bank building that is across the street from its State Street location.

President and CEO Dale Klock said the building was available for around two years and were concerned the building would fall into disrepair.

"It's a beautiful building

on the main street and right across from us and we just wanted to make sure that maybe if we bought it, we could maintain it until we could find the right business to move into that building," he said.

Klock said that may look to see if they could use the building, but adds that Carthage Savings Bank does not have immediate plans to expand.

There have been a couple of businesses that have reached out to Carthage Savings Bank. Those businesses would use the area as office space.

"We really want it to be a building that would spur some development, a business that would bring people into the community. That not only would help for us, Carthage Savings, but also the other

businesses that are here and hopefully maybe even spur some interest in other businesses moving into the community because we do have some empty storefronts on State Street," he said.

They would prefer to sell the building to a business instead of renting the space out. However, Klock said they are willing to work with the potential buyer.

"We really want to make sure that it's going to be a business that's really viable and spur some economic development downtown," he said.

The purchase price was \$375,000.

Having the property so that another bank didn't open across the street "was part of our factoring" Klock said.

Lewis County Humane Society protecting county's animals

The Lewis County Humane Society shelter is located on the Pine Grove Road in Glenfield, just 7 miles outside of Lowville, NY. We are a no-kill shelter that takes in lost or stray dogs brought in by Dog Control for 17 townships in Lewis County, 1 township in Jefferson County, and the Fort Drum installation. The shelter works very hard



See HUMANE C4

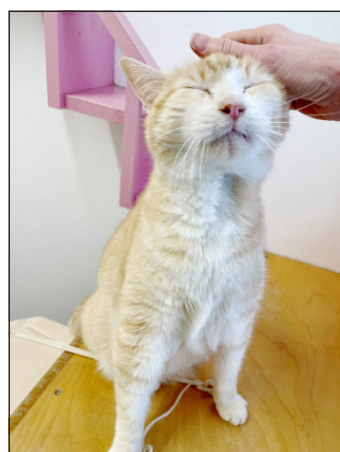
Ricky



Puppies



Buddy



Clancy



Kanga

Attorney Timothy A. Farley in practice for more than three decades

North Country native Timothy A. Farley has practiced law in the area for more than 30 years. After being in practice since 1987, along with paralegal Tina M. Soukup, he opened a general practice law office in Carthage in 1999, located at 514 State Street. To better serve the area, a second office was open in Watertown in 2002.

Tim Farley decided early in his career that his practice would be for the benefit of real people with real world problems. He represents individuals mainly and is very aware that the cost of legal services is one of the major concerns that people have when consulting a lawyer. Mr. Farley has had a long and rewarding career because he brings personal attention to each and every one of his clients, at a reasonable cost.

Each with their own particular area of expertise, Rebecca Knight, Matthew Ashcroft, Kristin Tefft, Maya Smith and Kayla Compo assist between the two offices.

The firm concentrates on real estate closings for both buyers and sellers, representing financial institutions in mortgage lending, providing legal support for many of the local towns and villages and aiding local businesses and corporations with their various legal requirements. Individual clients regularly come to Attorney Farley for real estate matters, forming LLC's, personal injury cases, handling estates and trusts, preparing wills and setting up health care proxy and power of attorney.

Attorney Farley has made it his business to stay in contact with the local community and to maintain a legal practice that meets the needs of his clients.

A Rising Multi-Discipline Design Firm Welcomes New Employees to the Team

Aubertine and Currier Architects, Engineers & Land Surveyors, PLLC is a NYS Certified Women Business Enterprise located in the City of Watertown. For over 24 years, we have been servicing clients throughout the North Country by leading projects with innovative, efficient design while growing long-lasting, professional relationships with clients and colleagues. Through decades of hard work and expertise, we have become a major player in the developments happening in our local communities.



We would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new hires this past year and congratulate our newest Partner.

Peter Partlow is a valuable addition to our engineering department as a Civil/Site Designer. Peter has recently relocated to Wellesley Island, New York, from Baltimore, Maryland. Peter

obtained a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Morgan State University. Following graduation, he was offered the opportunity to work with Contech Engineering Solutions as a Stormwater Design Engineer. He lived among the St. Lawrence River throughout the summer with his grandmother and was thrilled to move up here with his Chocolate Lab, Bean. Peter enjoys the outdoors, so having many opportunities for hiking and fishing makes

See FIRM C4

Many Taxpayers are Confused and Even Frustrated When Getting Ready to File Their Taxes

The last few years have had numerous changes to the tax codes and regulations. The 2023 tax filing is no different. This year there are changes to Standard Deductions, Earned Income Tax Credits, even the Tax Brackets. Rightfully so many people are confused and frustrated when it comes to filing their taxes. It really does require the assistance of tax professionals, such as M.R. Gaebel, to navigate through these complex waters. You can be assured that the year-round professionals at M.R. Gaebel are constantly staying up to date of the most rules enacted (or proposed) by the IRS and utilize that knowledge in the services provided to their clients.



Also, it seems like every year a new trend in tax preparation services is promoted. First, there were seasonal tax office locations in previously empty store fronts. Then, as soon as tax season ended, they seem to disappear. Next, there were pop-up locations in stores and malls. Now, it seems to be all about

on-line internet companies, which promise fast and easy, with little effort at all. The professionals at M.R. Gaebel Tax and Accounting Services recognize the importance of filing your taxes in a correct manner, which will help maximize your potential refund. Quite simply, when it comes to filing your taxes should you just follow the latest trend? Or use real tax professionals!

"Today's tax laws really can complicate a person's filing their tax returns. We can help sort all of that out and maximize your opportunity for a refund. We also take pride in the fact that our services are offered

See TAXES C4

Lewis County Humane Society
Phone: 315-376-8349
 Shelter Manager: Amber Zehr
 Location: 6390 Pine Grove Road, Glenfield, NY
 Mail: P.O. Box 682, Lowville, NY 13367
Email: LewisCountyHumaneSociety@gmail.com
Facebook: [LewisCoHumaneSociety](https://www.facebook.com/LewisCoHumaneSociety) 501c3 OR
Lewis County Humane Society NY 501c3
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Taxes

From C3

throughout the entire year, not just seasonally. Being local is also important to our clients. Too often outside agencies come in and offer services at cut rates and then increase their prices later on, as well as a

decline in service. In today's unstable financial atmosphere, it is very important that our clients have access to us, and not just during tax preparation season. We are able to offer a full array of tax and accounting services at any time of the year."

Small Business Payroll and Record Keeping are an important part of the services offered at M.R. Gaebel.

"Small business owners spend countless hours each week doing payroll and recordkeeping, when they could utilize that time on their business generating more income. Our payroll services are an affordable, timely, local option to make doing payroll and recordkeeping easier. In addition, with the host of government agencies reporting

requirements that are constantly changing, a business owner has to ask themselves...is it worth the risk? Errors can result in unnecessary penalties and interest owed. That is where our trained staff can help. We offer a variety of services, ranging from certified payrolls, year end and quarterly reports, payroll checks, payroll taxes, direct deposits,

workers compensation audits and more. The business owner can pick which services best fit their needs".

M.R. Gaebel sets the standard of tax and accounting services for businesses and residents of Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties. They specialize in offering their clients personalized, professional, quality service together

with CPA expertise, knowledge and experience...all at affordable rates.

Appointments are available in Watertown and Carthage. To schedule an appointment for individual tax services, or for more information, please call 315-493-1862, or visit them at their website, www.mrgaebel.com.

Firm

From C3

him extremely excited.

We are pleased to welcome William Locy as our Cost Estimator in our Land Surveying Department. William graduated in 2021 from Jefferson Community College with an Associate Degree in Applied Science and Engineering and continued his education at Minnesota State College Southeast graduating in May of 2023 with a degree in Computer Aided Design. William resides in Dexter, NY and is an outdoor fanatic enjoying hunting, fishing, boating and likes to build 3D Models.

Lastly, we are thrilled to have Stevie Currier as an Administrative Assistant on our team. Digital Media and Photography are two of Stevie's passions. While growing up, she would educate herself on learning how to edit and produce

content and has continued to evolve over the years. Throughout her first year here, she has been preparing through Drone Pilot Ground School to become an FAA Certified Drone Pilot. Stevie resides in Sackets

Harbor, NY and enjoys spending time outdoors by the water. Some of her favorite things to do are traveling, writing, and working out.

Aubertine and Currier Promotes Survey Project Manager to Partner

With pleasure, A&C announces the promotion of Jonathan D. Boomhower, PLS, to the position of Partner, elevating A&C to a six-partner firm. Jonathan earned an Associate Degree in Applied Science in Natural Resources Conservation from SUNY Morrisville. With over 25 years of surveying experience, Jonathan embarked on his career immediately after college. During his 13-year tenure at A&C, Jonathan has progressed from a

field surveyor to overseeing survey operations and ultimately achieving the status of Licensed Land Surveyor. His considerable expertise has played a crucial role in the company's success, and we are excited to announce his promotion to a leadership position within the firm.

For A&C, 2023 was yet another successful year. Our firm obtained the opportunity to take part in several significant projects.

Ron Clapp, the owner of the historic Carleton Villa, has officially selected A&C as the architect of record for the highly anticipated restoration project. The Carleton Villa is a beautiful, one-of-a-kind structure that dates to 1895 and was designed by Cornell's most celebrated architect William H Miller. It is situated on the picturesque island of Carleton in the beautiful Thousand Islands region along the banks of the St. Lawrence River and has long been a

favorite of architectural enthusiasts and history buffs.

A&C delivered Professional Design Services on the new Railhead Facility for the Fort Drum and 10th Mountain Division. The investment will extend and upgrade the railway-loading facility on post to facilitate the efficient movement of troops, heavy equipment and vehicles to support the swift deployment of 10th Mountain Division (LI) troops. The new Railhead Facility includes a Railhead Operations Building, Loading Ramp canopy, Guard Shack and three loading ramps.

As part of the City of Plattsburgh's visionary plan for the Environmental Learning Center, A&C was given the opportunity to partner with CDM Smith and were entrusted with the task of creating an extraordinary destination that flawlessly harmonizes with the encompassing scenery. The efforts by the

design team resulted in a transformative project that will captivate

visitors and locals alike. The project's intent was to engage the public to discover Plattsburgh Harbor like never before at the state-of-the-art Plattsburgh Water Resource Recovery Facility. Nestled on the stunning shores of Lake Champlain, this architectural gem, influenced by the iconic Brutalist style, offers a unique blend of education, recreation, and revitalization.

Lastly, the development of Eisenhower Lock Visitors' Center is presently completed. The facility serves as a year-round hub for global visitors, providing insights into the St. Lawrence River's living environment, history, and the intricacies of lock systems. GLS partnered with A&C to create a groundbreaking Visitors' Center at the Eisenhower Locks, designed with a strong focus on ADA accessibility, elevator design, and

architectural excellence. The goal is to provide a captivating experience for visitors from around the globe, ensuring that everyone can fully immerse themselves in the fascinating history and workings of the St. Lawrence River and its lock systems. The state-of-the-art facility has been meticulously designed to accommodate individuals of all abilities, ensuring an inclusive environment for all.

Aubertine and Currier always welcomes resumes from qualified applicants in the fields of Architecture, Structural or Civil Engineering, Land Surveying and Construction Inspection. If you are looking for a rewarding career at a design firm, we might be the right fit for you! For further information on our firm, please visit us on Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn, and check out our website www.aubertinecurrier.com. We cannot wait to see what 2024 will bring!

Humane

From C3

to reunite them with their families. If the owner is not found, they are vetted, and made available for adoption. The shelter also takes in surrendered animals from private individuals. These animals are also vetted and then put up for adoption.

In past years when our numbers were low, we could help support kill shelters by transferring in their animals. Due to our own local overwhelming homeless animal population, we took in just 7 dogs via transfer from a non-local shelter this year. We also helped out Anita's Stevens Swan shelter by taking 4 of their longer term dogs. We transferred out zero animals.

SUPPORT

Not surprisingly, our vetting and our Animal Care Workers continue to be our highest costs. As of Feb 1, 2023, our vetting costs increased significantly. We continue to do what we can to keep costs down. This year we changed many protocols & procedures, and began purchasing all of our own tests & meds, as well as administering vaccines & tests ourselves.

We pride ourselves on taking the unwanted, sick and injured that no one else will. We like to be the ones who can say "yes," when so many others say "sorry." We can only do that because of your support!

If you're wondering how you can help, here are a few ways: Adopt, become a member, donate supplies, volunteer, donate items for our raffles, or drop off your returnable bottles & cans. We are always grateful for monetary donations, which can be sent several ways to include our Facebook Donate button, PayPal to lewiscountyhumanesociety@gmail.com, Venmo to [@lewiscountyhumanesociety](https://venmo.com/lewiscountyhumanesociety), or you can mail checks to PO Box 682, Lowville, NY 13367. Of course, you can always drop off donations at our

shelter. We are a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

BOARD & STAFF

It was a busy year with Board & Staff Changes!

We had one Board member retire, Joe Hall (Treasurer) and was replaced by new Board member Kelsey Blackwell of Blackwell Bookkeeping. We joke that we are becoming technologically advanced and are now using QuickBooks Online & Payroll, and our employees receive their paychecks direct deposit. We had 3 other Board members resign, Amber Reape, Cherie Moore (Secretary) & Miranda Cronk. We also had an additional four members join, Breanna Storey (new Secretary), Kaela Storey, Robin Waite and Jame Aloï. Thank You to the old and Welcome to the new!

We had a quite a staffing merry-go-round with a couple of short term employees coming and going, and finished the year with new employees Piper Merry and Hannah Murphy-Bruce.

ADOPTABLE PETS

We are proud of our excellent adoption rate, and most pets spend a short time with us. We do, however, have 13 pets right now that have been with us over 6 months. You're likely to know their names if you follow us. Let's start with the cats.

Six of these long-term residents are cats that we took in when an elderly gentleman who cared for them went into Hospice. It was his last wish for these kitties to be taken care of. Many were very scared, but in nine months with us they've come such a long way in socialization. They are: Sweetie, Richard, Marris, Sleepy, Callum & Bootsie.

Lemon, a 1 yr old female, is a very timid girl who is under-socialized. She loves Libby.

Libby is a 2 yr old female, also timid but can be pet. She has been with us 6 months. Lemon is her BFF.

August is our longest cat resident. She is 2 yrs old and has been with us 11 months.

She is very friendly.

Chanterelle is a 1 yr old female who is very friendly. She's been waiting 6 months.

And onto the dogs who've been with us over 6 months:

Kanga is a 2 yr old female pit mix who came in as a stray and was never claimed. She has lot of lots of energy. We believe she'd be fine with kids but does need to be an only pet. Kanga has been waiting 7 months.

Ricky is a 4 yr old male Treeing Walker Coonhound. He originally came from a kill shelter in TN, then was adopted from us back in Dec 2020. He was returned to us in Aug 2023 for an incident over nail trimming. He does not like his nails trimmed and will try to bite over it. That can easily be left to the professionals. We have had no issues with him here whatsoever. We think he'd be good with most other dogs, but needs a home with no small children.

Buddy is a 5 year old male pit. He's been with us for 17 months. The progress he's made is nothing short of amazing. He has been in training continuously and is a very smart boy who is eager to please. He does take time in trusting new people but is immensely better with his interactions. We believe he's ready for his home but does need a no other pet and no children home.

You can find more info on these and all of our adoptable animals on our website at lewiscountyhumanesociety.org. If you think you may have the right home for any of these pets, please come visit them! All adoptions include spay/neuter of pet, testing, up to date shots, and microchip for dogs. Our website also has a fee list, our hours, what to do if you've lost/found an animal, and all sorts of other info.

SPOTLIGHT

Clancy - This loving boy deserves a forever with as much love as his previous mom had for him. She unfortunately passed away and her 5 cats found themselves at our shelter. One

was sadly diagnosed with cancer and was laid to rest. Three were adopted into the same home, which left Clancy alone at 15 years old. He is a sweet old man and purrs endlessly for pets. He is diabetic which has scared people away from adopting. This condition is so much easier than you would think and he takes his insulin like a champ. Clancy deserves his forever and we know it would make his mom so happy to see him loved and doted on during the remainder of his life here on earth, before meeting up with her in Heaven.

PROUD

Our staff and volunteers work tirelessly to get many of our animals to the point of being adoptable. You've seen dogs come in that are barking and ready to take off someone's head, cats that are not able to be touched at all. The staff and volunteers spend countless hours training these animals and working with them to accept a human's love and guidance. It is not a quick or easy task. Sometimes we get injured... bit...scratched. Sometimes just our hearts get broken. But there is nothing we won't do to give an animal their chance at forever.

VOLUNTEER/FOSTER

We're always looking for individuals or groups who want to lend a helping hand. If you have some time and energy to spare, please call or stop by the shelter to ask how you can help. You'd be surprised at the amount of work, cleaning and laundry done daily! And of course, the animals always need to be loved on, brushed, walked or even taken out for date. We are always in need of fosters for the animals as well.

TIDBITS

The LCHS started a new Facebook page Lewis County Humane Society NY 501c3 due to issues with LewisCo HumaneSociety 501c3 page. We were receiving violations repeatedly for posting animals (no it didn't make sense) and therefore took away our donate button for

months at a time. We then lost all Admin ability on the old page when Cheryl's personal account was hacked. Please like and follow this new page, as at some point we will be taking down the old page.

GRANTS/MATCHES RECEIVED 2023:

We apply for as many grants as we can, but as you can imagine they are quite competitive. 2023 was a year that will go down in the history books for us with the award of a NYS Companion Animal Capital Fund Grant in the amount of \$500,000! That took most of our time & resources, but we also received one other small grant of \$2,500 from Virbac for The Every Pet Project. We also received some very generous donations/matches to include a Valentine's Day Fundraiser/match from an anonymous donor in the amount of \$7,000, and a donation/match in the amount of \$10,000 from the Burrstone Basset Fund from our Double our December campaign.

PROJECTS/UPGRADES

It was another busy year with projects. Our Shelter rental house was completely cleaned and remodeled, to include a new furnace, and we now have new tenants.

And the BIG news is...we are finally about to break out of our several year holding pattern on our Capital Improvement Project! Good things take time. As mentioned above, we sent in our application in April for the NYS Companion Animal Capital Fund grant. In June we received notification we were approved, and in December we were awarded a \$500,000 contract. Our Shelter is required to fund a minimum match of \$166,667 on top of the \$500K, plus all ineligible expenses. That's a lot of fundraising! We have committed to a \$709K project total. The LCHS has never received a major grant like this, nor ever had a major construction project. To say we are thrilled and excited is an understatement!

We've already started construction with a replacement

of a portion of our steel roof in Dec 2023 at a cost of \$18,950.

We have been taking donations for years now, specifically for the cat rooms / dog kennel projects. They are still being graciously accepted. We are tracking all of your donations, as well as names of those who donated over \$500 to be displayed on plaques, as promised.

We've published a couple times what the project will entail, but it is essentially a complete remodel of inside our facility, as well as the fencing/dogs runs outside. If you'd like to read more about it, please see our web page at lewiscountyhumanesociety.org.

THANK YOU

How do we find the words? Working in the non-profit shelter industry is tough. It's stressful. It's heart breaking. We want to save them all and give each the best care possible. That all comes with a price tag and we never know if there will be enough. But at the end of each month somehow we find out that our supporters have come thru once again, and we can keep the lights on. And then, on top of keeping the lights on, we have to raise our minimum match for our grant to make our lights shine a little brighter maybe. We ask and you provide, and we are grateful in ways words could never explain. We have complete faith WE can do this.

Please keep sharing those posts, fighting the good fight with us, donating your cans, and holding birthday fundraisers for us. It really does help more than you'll ever know! Thank you for loving our animals as much as we do. We are honored you choose us to support.

We also want to throw a quick thank you to Diamonds in the Rough program at Canine Sports Unlimited, which provides us free weekly training for our shelter animals. And thank you to Canine College for taking German Shepherds Trigger & Briggs through bigger and better things!



The owners of Snow Ridge Ski Resort will use the grant from the first round of the Lewis County Development Corporation's Vacant Property Revitalization Program to transform the top floor of this Alpine-styled building in Turin into a short term apartment rental space. Photo provided

Lewis Co. awards grants to revamp old buildings; most recipients will turn vacant sites into rental apartments

By JULIE ABBASS

Originally published May 20, 2023

LOWVILLE — A total of about \$691,000 in grants has been awarded to nine property owners to make improvements in old buildings around Lewis County.

The majority of the recipients of Lewis County Development Corporation's Vacant Property Revitalization grants will use the funds to transform the upper floors or sections of their buildings into short- or long-term rental apartments.

n 5421 Shady Ave - \$71,730

Owners: Meleshchuk Properties/crumbs! Bake Shop

n 7619-23 N. State Street - \$100,000

Owner: Brooke Fullmer (Dollar General)

n 5406-5424 Shady Ave. - \$100,000

Owners: Rhonda A. and Chase J. Vanucchi, Kellogg Block Building

n 3336 Lincoln Street, Port Leyden (former Port Leyden school) - \$100,000

Owner: Mark and Kimberly Lemieux, Port Leyden Portal; renovate section of second floor into short- and long-term rental apartments.

n 4173 West Road, Turin - \$20,000

Owner: Nick Mir/ Eastern Resort Management LLC, Snow Ridge Ski Resort,

n 1147 State Route 26, West Leyden - \$50,000



A \$100,000 grant from the Vacant Property Revitalization Program through the Lewis County Development Corporation will help Double Play Community Center owner Dan Myers transform this former restaurant space into a fitness center with community spaces. Watertown Daily Times

Owners: Charles M., Irene R., Dean, Guy C. Case; second floor into apartments and new commercial space on the first floor.

Grants were also given to some companies working to start or expand their businesses.

n 6912 Bardo Road, town of Lowville (former restaurant) - \$100,000

Owner: Daniel Myers,

Double Play Community Center; transition the space into a fitness center, class studios and community group spaces.

n 3823 Marmon Road, town of Lyonsdale (former ReEnergy site) - \$100,000

Owner: Rezc Abdelrahmen, McRez Packing International LLC; to turn a former storage building into a job-creating

USDA-certified meat processing facility.

n 9801 Bridge St., Croghan - \$49,235

Owner: Bob Lyndaker, Mickey Lehman, Dave Moore, Bob Chamberlain, Grand Slam Safety LLC; turn a former bus garage into more manufacturing space, creating more jobs.

At a bare minimum, projects had to make use of currently

vacant buildings or floors in buildings. Those involving tearing down an existing structure were not eligible.

Beyond that, Lewis County Development Corporation board scored each proposal on a number of criteria to determine which of the 13 applicants would be funded.

Criteria included financial feasibility; reducing

blight in downtown areas; project resulting in new business space or places to live; and level of benefit to the community, for example, increasing the tax base through improved property value, creating jobs or developing a new business.

The grants could only cover up to 50% of the total project cost and will either be reimbursed when all work on the project is complete or in part when certain benchmarks - completed lead and asbestos assessments or the completed mitigation or removal of lead and asbestos, for example - have been met in order to "keep the funds flowing" for the property owners according to Naturally Lewis Finance Director Cheyenne Steria.

The grant program is funded through \$1 million of the American Rescue Plan money set aside by the county. Mrs. Steria said there will be a second round of the program and \$50,000 was set aside for the program's administration and implementation.

Although the county Development Corporation would like to see the projects completed within a year, Mrs. Steria said, "there isn't a hard timeframe... some of the larger projects like the Kellogg Building and the Dollar General building, will take longer."



The Globe Building on Court St. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

Globe building renovations underway

Eleven apartments planned for top floors with commercial space on ground level

By CRAIG FOX
cfox@wdt.net

This story appeared in the Watertown Daily Times in October 2023.

A Syracuse developer will be redeveloping the Globe building that has been vacant for years.

Daniel Queri, owner of Queri Development Co. and the property manager for the building, said Wednesday that the former minimall building will be fully renovated and turned into 11 market-rate apartments on the second and third floors. There will be commercial space for three or four tenants on the ground floor.

In March, a Pittsburgh company, 302 Globe LLC, purchased the 28,000-square-foot cavernous structure at 302 Court St., once the home of a minimall.

The company renovated a nearby old downtown industrial building at 159 J.B. Wise Place into offices on the first floor and apartments on the upper floor.

The Globe building will be a similarly completed project, Queri said.

The proximity with downtown and the new YMCA under construction across the street attracted the developers to the building, Queri said.

They like urban settings, he said, adding it's not suburban living.

Work on repairing the roof and installing new concrete flooring should be completed in the next few weeks. The old siding from the minimall days has already been removed. Larger windows will be installed.

"We're off and going," he said. "We're excited about the project."

The building is expected to be ready for occupancy next August.

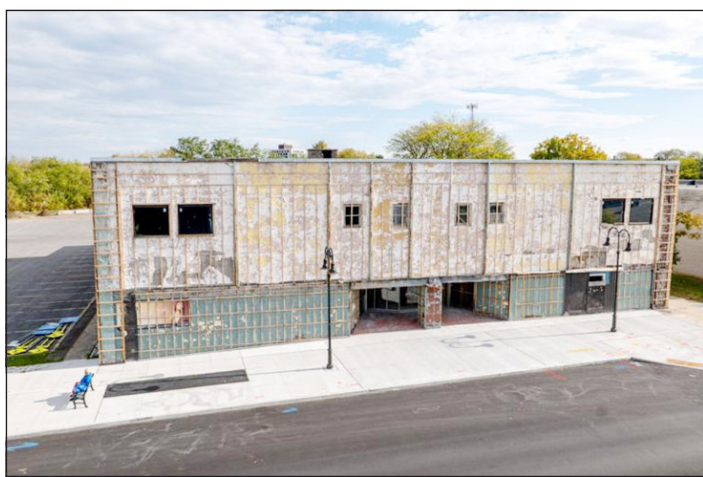
The Watertown Local Development Corporation's revolving loan committee on Wednesday approved a \$400,000 loan to help finance the project. The economic development agency's full board is expected to approve the loan on Thursday.

The Development Authority of New York also is participating with the nearly \$3 million project with a \$400,000 loan.

The local development corporation, also known as the Watertown Trust, moved its offices into the newly restored J.B. Wise Place building this summer.

"This place is great," said Watertown Trust CEO Donald W. Rutherford.

Noting the J.B. Wise building, Rutherford said that Queri and his partner have the



Renovation work is getting started at the Globe Building on Court Street in downtown Watertown. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

experience to get the Globe redevelopment completed.

In 2021, he and a partner, David Wilkie, acquired the J.B. Wise building and invested about \$2.1 million in it.

Wilkie and Queri are working together on the Globe building.

Watertown Trust board member Michael Pierce is also confident with what the company will do with the Globe building.

"We need to have new faces to come into the area and bring fresh ideas," he said.

Over the years, the city has been concerned with the Globe building's worsening condition. Three years ago, it was condemned when pieces of masonry fell near the roof and had to be repaired.

The project is coming at a time when the \$3.9 million downtown streetscape project along Court Street is nearly completed.

Businessman Stephen Bradley also completed a renovation of a nearby building that will be turned into an events center.

Queri was a partner in completing The Bradford, a

23-unit apartment project that opened in 2009, and a multi-unit apartment and 2,500-square-foot project in 2019.

Individually, he also developed and owns multiple projects in Syracuse. He also served as a consultant to develop space for a public broadcasting station, nonprofits and literacy organizations, as well as for-profit businesses and a 200-seat performance space and apartments.

For years, the Globe building housed a minimall and previously was the home of the Globe Store until its closing in 1973. Re-Sale America, a used-goods business, was the last occupant. In 2014, a California businessman donated the former department store to the Calvary Chapel North Country Church.

The church planned to redevelop it into its meeting space, a Christian bookstore, cafe, radio station, a used clothing shop, conference rooms and several church ministries.

But those plans never materialized.

Good Fellos in Sackets Harbor Open 7 Days a Week - All Year

Good Fellos Brick Oven Pizza and Wine Bar is pleased to provide their guests with an exceptional, relaxed setting located in the heart of the scenic Village of Sackets Harbor. They proudly serve authentic Italian cuisine, scratch-made brick oven pizza, and a full-service wine bar, in an intimate atmosphere of a tastefully renovated historic building. Good Fellos is known for exceptional customer service, delectable meals made with fresh ingredients, an excellent selection of wines, and a unique atmosphere that is unmatched in the area.

Good Fellos is one of the only dining establishments in the area that is open seven days a week, all year long. "Not only are we open all year, 7 days a week, we are one of the few places you can still be served after 9 pm," commented Owner Richard Cunha.

Good Fellos is famous for their brick oven pizza. The dough is made fresh and from scratch for extra flavor and authenticity. Savor every bite of their signature appetizers while you enjoy one of their 16 local craft beers on tap or choose an exquisite wine from their extensive 50 bottle list. They also offer many other local and regional breweries bottled and ice cold for those who might be looking for something unique and refreshing. Wednesday nights play host to their ever popular "Wine Nights" - a cure for the mid-week blues - starting at 4pm.

Of course their wide variety of Italian entrees are the highlight of the dining experience at Good Fellos. Their extensive selection of menu items are prepared



fresh daily by their talented chefs and cook staff. Be sure to check their famous chalkboard and ask the friendly waitstaff for information on new daily menu items, as well as pairing suggestions with your favorite wines. Top off your experience with their delicious desserts - all made from scratch in-house. Owner Richard Cunha states: "Our ingredients are locally sourced whenever possible, fresh, and hand-selected to provide our guests with the finest quality and the best experience possible." Lunch is served on Saturday and Sunday starting at 11:30 am.

One of the most popular things about Good Fellos is their four seasons dining

room. The space is warm and cozy during the cold winter months, and open and airy during the summer months. It is also the perfect place for private parties and functions of different sizes.

Good Fellos is less than a 15-minute drive from Watertown, and a very short drive from Fort Drum. Please call the restaurant at 315-646-3463 for more information on booking an individual reservation or private party. To view their menu, visit their website: www.goodfellos.com, or their Facebook or Instagram page. Reservations are welcome for certain size groups...or walk in to discover the difference at Good Fellos.



Good Fellos

Brick Oven Pizza & Wine Bar



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24-WO-00527 (02/24)

2023 Year in Review: GYMO Architecture, Engineering, & Land Surveying, D.P.C

GYMO, DPC is a full-service Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying and Construction Management firm who has been serving the North Country for over 30 years. We would like to sincerely thank our valued clients, in all sectors, who have trusted our team of professionals in helping bring their great ideas to life.

Community is a key element of our organization, and we encourage our employees to participate in local events and be active on local boards. In the Spring, our employees participated in the Annual Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Soggy Sneaker 5K race at the Joseph A Blake Wildlife Sanctuary. During the Christmas season our employees rang the Salvation Army's iconic red kettle bell in an effort to raise money and awareness about the organization that strives to "do the most good."

Additionally, we sponsored and decorated a tree in the North Country Festival of Trees, which supported the Samaritan Medical Center Foundation. The award winning, warm woodland Christmas tree was named "most elegant" and decorated by Architectural Designer, McKenzie Fisk-Kamide, Communications Coordinator, Margaret Fayle and Partner, Business Manager, Brandy Lucas.

GYMO proudly sponsors the Greater Watertown

North Country Chamber of Commerce, the Carthage Chamber of Commerce, Naturally Lewis, NNY Builder's Exchange and other North County Community programs, civic organizations, and nonprofits, including the Tug Hill Local Government Conference, Lewis County Agricultural Society, Henderson Business and Community Council, and Carthage Area Hospital Foundation, amongst many others.

GYMO's own community is continuing to grow, as we have added six additional team members this year, Corinne Bernd, Robert Cornell, Michael Wetmore, Carol Michalski, Emily Trudeau, and Nathan Fillingham.

Corinne joined the firm in February 2023 as a Design Engineer. She graduated in May 2022 from Clarkson University with a BS in Civil Engineering. Her primary responsibilities include CAD surface modeling and design drafting, engineering calculations and reports, as well as contributing to various aspects of project deliverables.

Robert "Bobby" joined the firm in April 2023 as a Senior Construction Manager. Bobby is a veteran in the industry with over thirty years of experience. He specializes in masonry, running his own business for a decade. In May 2023, Michael also joined the Construction

Management division as a Senior Construction Manager. Mike is a journeyman pipefitter/plumber. On their respective job sites, each will be tasked with running construction job meetings, safety meetings, reviewing change orders, preparing monthly reports detailing progress on each project under the contract, preparing punch lists, and preparing certificates of Substantial Completion and Final Completion for each project.

Carol joined GYMO in May 2023 as a Project Executive. She brings forty years of experience in the construction industry. Her role requires her to be involved during pre-construction with constructability review, scheduling, estimating, existing facilities review and final adjustments before the project is bid. After the project is awarded, she is responsible for overseeing the onsite construction personnel, reviewing the proposed schedule from the contractors, and developing a master project schedule. Carol is also responsible for running project meetings, managing the project budget and processing all change orders, allowance authorizations and payment applications.

Emily joined the firm in May 2023 as a Design Architect. She graduated from Clarkson in May 2023 with a degree in Civil Engineering. Her primary

responsibilities include, creating Design detailed drawings, using REVIT or AutoCAD for residential, commercial and municipal projects, preparing correspondence, technical specifications and cost estimates, and performing field inspections and site visits.

Nathan joined the firm in May 2023, as our newest Survey Technician. He is a 2020 LeMoyne graduate with a bachelor's degree in biology and bachelor's degree in psychology. Nathan assists in conducting Boundary Retracement

Surveys, Design Surveys, Topographic Surveys, ALTA/NSPS Surveys and Construction Surveys, on behalf of both residential and commercial clients.

Over the summer, Hunter Garnsey, a student at Clarkson University, completed an internship with GYMO, working in both our Engineering and Construction Management divisions. Hunter assisted with various tasks including drafting, and on-site photo documentation in the field to verify that work is completed per construction drawings

and specifications. It was a pleasure to have Hunter and we were happy to provide him with the experience.

GYMO realizes the importance of having adequate staffing on a project which is why we have hand selected these individuals to bring their own unique strengths to our team. We are actively looking to hire a Design Engineer, Senior Project Engineer, and more. If you are ready to work hard and collaborate with an excellent team,

See GYMO C8



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email your resume to web@gymodpc.com

In addition to our new employees, we would also like to congratulate McKenzie Fisk Kamide on her promotion to Architectural Department Manager and Mark Tompkins on his promotion to Project Engineer. McKenzie and Mark could not be more deserving. They are natural leaders in their departments and go above and beyond to satisfy our clients. We are lucky to have them on our team!

2023 allowed us to attend trade shows, conferences and forums, and other events that allowed us to reconnect with past clients, and foster relationships with new ones. Our multi-disciplinary firm has the capability to serve a diverse array of clients including Public Housing Authorities,

Municipalities, K-12 Schools, the commercial sector, private developers and residential clients.

Our impressive portfolio includes many facets, including but not limited to, sustainable project development, historic preservation/restoration, residential design, boundary surveys, ALTA/ACSM land title surveys, subdivision mapping, topographic mapping, engineering studies, site design, water and wastewater facilities design, storm water pollution prevention plans, project estimating, scheduling and phasing, drawing coordination, bidding services, construction inspection, and project closeout services.

2023 was full of new beginnings and satisfying completions. In June, GYMO helped celebrate the ribbon cutting for the nearly \$3 million project at ConnexCare healthcare facility. All departments combined forces to provide a convenient outdoor testing center designed to prevent cross contamination throughout other areas of the building, an expanded parking lot, a walking trail and an outdoor meeting center powered and equipped with wifi, to be enjoyed by staff and community members alike.

Our Architecture Department proudly designed a new 2,167 sq. ft. pavilion for St. Anthony's in Watertown. The previous structure was damaged in a fire the year prior. GYMO worked efficiently to have the project completed in time for the beloved Mt. Carmel Fest, held annually in June. The new pavilion includes all new kitchen equipment and natural ventilation. The façade materials seamlessly complement the adjacent church and rectory.

Our Engineering team provided the site design for the Splash Car Wash located in LeRay which opened in September. This 4,000sf facility is complete with an elaborate automatic wash bay, drive lanes, and a large cleaning area with 18 vacuum stations. To commemorate the event, washes were free all weekend with the opportunity to donate to Clear Path for Veterans, a nonprofit committed to supporting our American heroes.

In August, the Architecture department celebrated the completion

of the new surgical unit at the Jefferson County SPCA open house. This facility is the only non-profit shelter in the area with surgical capabilities. It was a privilege to provide our design services to enhance the facility for animals in need.

In October, the Engineering Department hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Village of Lowville to celebrate the completion of Phase II of the Village of Lowville Groundwater Project and Phase III of the Wastewater Treatment Project. The groundwater project included the construction of two groundwater wells which will draw about 500,000 gallons per day, increasing access to Village water and reducing the risk of a shortage. The wastewater treatment project allowed a new synthetic liner in an 8 acre sewage lagoon as well as all aeration and diffuser equipment. Other project highlights include the construction of a new chlorine contact tank and a new chemical storage tank. Modernizations were made to both plants as well.

GYMO has made many major municipal improvement projects possible by assisting municipalities in securing federal and state grants. We will continue to pursue community focused projects and look forward to serving more municipalities with their building and infrastructure needs.

The GYMO staff has thoroughly enjoyed our newest neighbor in town, Chrissy Beanz. In November they cut the ribbon on their second bakeshop located on Washington Street in Watertown. Working closely with the owners, our Architecture team provided the designs that transformed the space into the most popular coffee spot in town.

In December, the JB Wise building, in the heart of downtown, held an open house to showcase the vast building improvements made that our Architecture team spearheaded. GYMO's team helped transform their first floor into innovative commercial office spaces, for creativity and collaboration. Their second and third floors have been designed as 13 modern and stylish apartments, offering one bedroom and studio layouts with a variety of amenities. It is rewarding to watch the transformation of downtown buildings while preserving their historic charm.

We have hit the ground running in 2024 with many exciting projects on the horizon. A sneak peak at some of our newly awarded upcoming projects include: architectural services for the Watertown City Hall, architectural services for The Globe Downtown Watertown, engineering services for the Town of Tupper Lake water system, a variety of projects as the Town Engineer for the Town of Potsdam, and managing the construction for the General Brown CSD Capital Project.

We would like to thank our valued clients in communities across the North Country for their continued support. Contact us today to discuss your next municipal, commercial or residential project with our team of professionals. We can't wait to bring your great ideas to life.

SUNY Potsdam Rated in Top Public Master's Universities in U.S.

Despite its small size, SUNY Potsdam continues to punch above its weight in national college rankings.

Washington Monthly recently ranked The State University of New York at Potsdam at No. 34 in the country—the top 7 percent—in its national public master's universities ratings, for the magazine's 2023 College Guide.

SUNY Potsdam came in at No. 47 out of all 604 public and private institutions that grant master's degrees on the Washington Monthly list, and was ranked in the top 35 public colleges in America.

"For over two centuries, SUNY Potsdam has been steadfast in providing an education

that is not only accessible and affordable, but also deeply ingrained in the betterment of society," said President Dr. Suzanne Smith. "This latest national recognition affirms our commitment to creating the difference-makers of tomorrow—helping students graduate with less debt, on a path to successful and fulfilling careers."

SUNY Potsdam also was recognized in Washington Monthly's Best Bang for the Buck (Northeast) rankings, which lists campuses that help non-wealthy students attain marketable degrees at affordable prices. Among public institutions, SUNY Potsdam ranked at No. 30 in the entire

Northeast for value.

The College rated highly by the magazine thanks in large part to the social mobility return it provides for graduates, helping students from all socioeconomic backgrounds earn their degrees and go on to fulfilling and successful careers, with as little debt as possible. Additionally, Potsdam scored highly for the number of undergraduates who go on to earn a Ph.D. or doctorate.

Likewise, in the U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges 2024 guide, SUNY Potsdam is now tied at No. 28 on the Top Public Schools – Regional Universities North list. The campus also ranked highly in the Top Performers on

Social Mobility and Best Value Schools lists.

U.S. News & World Report bases its rankings on assessment by peer institutions, graduation and retention rates, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources and alumni giving.

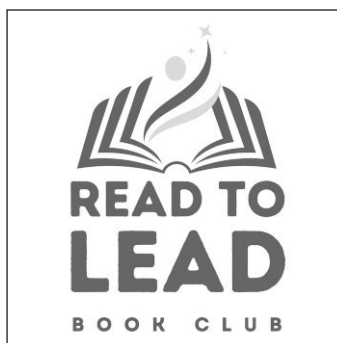
Founded in 1816, The State University of New York at Potsdam is one of America's first 50 colleges—and the oldest institution within SUNY. Home to the world-renowned Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam is known for its challenging liberal arts and sciences core, distinction in teacher training and culture of creativity. To learn more, visit www.potsdam.edu.

Introducing Read to lead: A book club and networking fusion

WATERTOWN – The Greater Watertown – North Country Chamber of Commerce (GWNC Chamber) is excited to announce the launch of Read to Lead, a groundbreaking book club that challenges the traditional norms of reading. In this innovative community, the emphasis is on engaging in meaningful discussions and fostering leadership growth.

"We understand that life can be busy, and reading isn't always feasible for everyone. However, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from the wisdom and insights found in books," said Kayla Jamieson, Chamber President & CEO. "With Read to Lead, we aim to create an inclusive space where individuals can engage with literature in a way that works best for them."

Not much of a reader? Read



to Lead offers a fresh perspective on the conventional book club model by recognizing that not everyone has the time or inclination to read every book in its entirety. Participants are encouraged to explore the themes, ideas, and lessons presented in the selected texts through various mediums such as summaries, podcasts, and discussions with fellow members.

Looking for your next page

turner? The Chamber has partnered with the Flower Memorial Library and the North Country Library System to offer the book club selection for no cost. The book selection is available as a traditional copy at the Flower Memorial Library and as an eBook or eAudio through Libby, the library's digital platform.

The first book our group will be discussing is "Love + Work" by Marcus Buckingham. The kick-off discussion will take place on Tues, April 30 at the Flower Memorial Library. The club will meet quarterly at the Flower Memorial Library. Club members are invited to join at no cost and with no annual obligation, come by when you're ready.

What sets Read to Lead apart is its focus on the discussion and application of ideas rather than the mere act of reading. By

providing alternative methods of engagement, the group opens its doors to a wider audience of busy professionals in all industries and avid learners seeking flexible ways to expand their knowledge through a diverse selection of books with topics surrounding leadership and professional development.

Join Read to Lead today and embark on a journey of discovery, growth, and connection with like-minded individuals. Whether you're a seasoned bookworm, casual reader, or podcast listener there's a place for you in this dynamic community where reading is optional and curiosity is encouraged!

For more information and to sign up for Read to Lead, visit www.watertownny.com and follow us on Facebook and Instagram @gunccchamber for updates.

Convalt Energy proceeding with financing for solar panel plant in Hounsfield



Site work began in December 2022 in preparation for Convalt Energy's 315,000-square-foot solar panel manufacturing plant near the Watertown International Airport in the town of Hounsfield. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

By CRAIG FOX
cfox@wdt.net

HOUNSFIELD — Convalt Energy could finally have its financing in place in April to proceed with its 315,000-square-foot solar panel manufacturing plant near the Watertown International Airport.

During a Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency meeting on Thursday, David J. Zembiec, CEO of the Jefferson County Economic Development

Corp., said Convalt is expected to have a package of loans in place in the next two months. The company also continues to obtain customers to manufacture its solar panels, he said.

"All indications, it's moving ahead," he told the JCIDA board.

In November, the JCIDA board gave Convalt a six-month extension to purchase 88 acres on Route 12F in the town of Hounsfield where the \$75 million plant

would be built as it continued to arrange its financing.

It was the third time that Convalt received an extension for the property agreement since the company proposed the plant more than two years ago.

In recent months, Zembiec started giving monthly updates on the status of the project.

Convalt has commitments or letters of intent from 20 short-term and long-term customers to

purchase solar panels. The company has shared that information with the JCIDA.

Construction is slated to start on the \$75 million plant this spring and take about six months to build.

The company would have a workforce of about 200 when it comes into operation with several production lines.

The project had been delayed by supply chain issues and the pandemic.

Samaritan Auxiliary Hosts Grand Opening and Naming Celebration of Coffee Shop

By SAMARITAN AUXILIARY

The Samaritan Auxiliary hosted a grand opening and naming celebration of its new coffee shop located inside the main entrance of the Samaritan Medical Center on Feb. 1.

The original coffee shop location, across from the Auxiliary's gift shop at the other end of the main lobby, was needed to construct additional rooms for the behavioral health unit in the emergency department. The behavioral health crisis has created a need for these extra beds, and this move will accommodate this provision.

A naming contest was held, and after receiving 109 suggestions from Samaritan Caregivers, the name "Sips by Samaritan Auxiliary," submitted by Ashlee Bucy, retention resolution specialist, was selected by the Auxiliary Board of Directors. Additionally, it was announced at the grand opening event that the coffee shop now offers delicious baked goods from Chrissy Beanz and specialty coffee beans from local vendors.

President of the Auxiliary, Shawna Cutuli, said, "We were excited to see so many Samaritan Caregivers and community members attend the event. The coffee shop and gift shop in the Medical Center are open for all to enjoy, and we are proud to showcase local products and vendors."

Shawna added, "In addition to the Samaritan Auxiliary Board members, we were pleased with how many Auxiliary members were first able to attend the event including Susan Johnson, Janet George, Lu Green, Cynthia Ahlheim, Ann Van Slyke, and Patti Schreck."

In 2024, Samaritan Auxiliary, composed entirely of volunteers, is proudly celebrating its 128th anniversary as it continues to play a vital role in enhancing the quality of care in the Samaritan Health system through the work of the volunteers and financial support. The House of the Good Samaritan was founded in 1881, and in 1896 the Trustees of the Hospital invited a group of ladies to act as an Auxiliary to the Board of Trustees with Mrs. Goodale as the first Auxiliary President. In 1899 a new hospital was built on Washington St. at a cost of \$48,500, and by 1900 the Auxiliary had 213 members, a treasury of \$2,485 and at Christmas they purchased dinner for the 25 patients hospitalized at a cost of \$25, and still had some money to spare.

Throughout its 128 years of volunteer service the Auxiliary has consistently dedicated its efforts to serving the needs of The House of the Good Samaritan - Samaritan Health as a major contributor of volunteer time and financial resources. Here are just a few of the highlights and contributions that the Auxiliary has made over the course of the 128 years:

- 1903 Twigs began as working subdivisions of the Auxiliary initially supplying the hospital with linens, dishes, equipment, special foods. During the Depression when need was great the Twigs and Auxiliary redecored and refurbished hospital rooms. One of the last Twig branches on the Samaritan 'tree', The Balsam Twigs, had been active until just recently, making a donation that benefited the patients in the Inpatient Mental Health Unit and Acute Rehab Unit in 2023. The Laurel Twig's, formed in 1987, largest fundraiser, Book Sales, raised about \$72,000 between 2001 and 2010 under the leadership of Sue Peters. The Bent Twigs, established in 1947, had 17 members fundraising in 2010 led by Beverly Lamica.
- 1942 Volunteers staffed the Visitor's Desk for the first time, and they continue to volunteer their time in the Auxiliary gift shops and other areas of the Samaritan System.
- 1954 Auxiliary Scholarships were awarded to student and graduate nurses and later

- expanded to all employees
- 1974 Auxiliary committed to a three-year project of underwriting \$50,000 worth of equipment and furnishings for the new Maternity Wing
- 1979 Auxiliary undertook a three-year project to raise \$75,000 for ultrasound equipment
- 1981 The "X-Rayted Follies", a musical with singing and dancing by staff and community members, produced by the Auxiliary, raised \$25,000 for the Cancer Treatment Center and Labor Room redecorating
- 1984 The Auxiliary to the House of the Good Samaritan was incorporated, then renamed in 1995 to Samaritan Auxiliary. The Auxiliary purchased \$34,000 of equipment and gave 34,796 hours of volunteer time
- 1991 Auxiliary committed to a \$250,000 pledge to the Capital Fund Drive for the new Maternity Unit. The "Rock-a-Bye Follies", a musical performance led by a director from New York City and performed by local community members and staff at the Dulles State Office Building, raised \$18,000
- 1992 The Auxiliary Gift Shop moved to a new location in the hospital and along with the SKH gift shop had profits of \$50,000. The four year "Twig Challenge" was accepted by 12 active Twig groups to raise \$500 each toward the Capital Fund Pledge, while the Auxiliary provided \$10,000 toward Samaritan Keep Home's renovations in the dining room.
- 1993-1994 Revenue to support the hospital was generated from the gift shops, Baby Photos, Sneaker and Jewelry Sales,



From left, Jessica Piatt-Walczyk, Shawna Cutuli, Beth Todd, Carry Young, Andrea Roden and Cady Hoistion, stand by Sips, the new Samaritan Medical Center coffee shop, Thursday morning after its grand opening. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times



Right, Joe Connor, and Vito Marinelli work the Sips by Samaritan Auxiliary coffee shop during its first hours of operation after the grand opening, Thursday morning. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times



Andrea Roden, Samaritan experience manager, celebrates as the Sips by Samaritan Auxiliary sign is unveiled during the ribbon cutting ceremony Thursday morning at Samaritan Medical Center. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

expanded to all employees

- 1974 Auxiliary committed to a three-year project of underwriting \$50,000 worth of equipment and furnishings for the new Maternity Wing
- 1979 Auxiliary undertook a three-year project to raise \$75,000 for ultrasound equipment
- 1981 The "X-Rayted Follies", a musical with singing and dancing by staff and community members, produced by the Auxiliary, raised \$25,000 for the Cancer Treatment Center and Labor Room redecorating
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- 1993-1994 Revenue to support the hospital was generated from the gift shops, Baby Photos, Sneaker and Jewelry Sales,

cookbook sales, patient television services

- 1995 Renamed to 'Samaritan Auxiliary' with volunteer hours exceeding 50,000
- 1996 A \$250,000 pledge to the Capital Fund Drive for the Maternity Unit was satisfied, with the Auxiliary as a lead donor; inaugural "Men's Night in the Kitchen" fundraiser.
- 1997-2001 Pledged \$300,000 as a lead donor to the new Cardiac Catheterization Lab; Donated artwork, carpeting, decorating, and equipment at Samaritan Medical Center and Samaritan Keep Home; Began the Uniform Sales and Bridge Marathon fundraisers
- 2002 Auxiliary participated in Samaritan Foundation's new community event, "A North Country Festival of Trees" donating \$5,000, two of the Twigs groups decorated trees and the Auxiliary provided volunteers for the event
- 2003 Auxiliary's new community fundraiser "One Night, One Diamond" initiated at Ives Hill Retirement Community with 50 guests in attendance
- 2005 Auxiliary funded the playing of Brahms "Lullaby" on the loudspeaker throughout the hospital when a baby is born
- 2006 Auxiliary's "One Night, One Diamond" event for the first time dedicated the proceeds to purchase equipment - this year targeting breast cancer and purchasing the Mammo-tome Breast Biopsy System and Neo-Probe Gamma Detection System
- 2007 - 2010 Auxiliary pledged \$750,000 to the Advancing Healthcare- Close to Home Capital Campaign, and Starbucks coffee shop launched

in SMC

- 2018 Auxiliary pledged \$500,000 to Samaritan Foundation's Capital Campaign to build the Walker Center for Cancer Care
- 2020 After a temporary closure in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, two of the Auxiliary Gift Shops at Samaritan Medical Center and Samaritan Summit Village and the Starbucks Coffee Shop in the Medical Center reopened slowly in 2021 despite the challenges. "One Night, One Diamond" was cancelled two weeks before the event in 2020, but due to the generosity of our sponsors and donors the Auxiliary presented a \$96,344 check to Samaritan for the equipment necessary to perform Mohs Surgery for dermatology and another Optimum UV-Light due to the urgent COVID needs.
- 2021 - 2022 the virtual event "One Night, One Diamond" in 2021 raised \$83,675 to Samaritan for PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), just one of the unexpected expenses brought on by the pandemic, and in 2022 the event raised \$110,322 for the purchase of another ultraviolet disinfection device, as well as supporting the purchase of five Sleep Lab Diagnostic Systems for the Samaritan Sleep Center
- 2023 "One Night, One Diamond", held again at The Commons on Fort Drum, proceeds purchased BioFire Modules for the Samaritan Laboratory and supported the purchase of the Hologic Breast PACS System with a check presentation to Samaritan totaling \$87,661
- The Auxiliary's "One Night, One Diamond" event proceeds have purchased nearly a million

dollars of capital equipment for Samaritan cancer patients, Smart IV pumps for pediatrics, non-invasive ventilators for newborns in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, equipment for the Emergency Room and Intensive Care Unit, equipment to perform Mohs Surgery for Dermatology, equipment to support Robotic Surgery, UV lights for disinfection, PPE for staff during the challenging time of the pandemic, and so much more.

The Auxiliary Scholarships that began in 1954 are still awarded each year. As part of its mission to support and enhance healthcare programs at Samaritan, in May of 2023 Samaritan Auxiliary Scholarships were awarded to two Samaritan employees who are furthering their education in healthcare. One recipient, Anna O'Neil, a Registered Nurse who is enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at Chamberlain University with an expected completion date in 2025, recently progressed her career by becoming an assistant nurse manager in the Progressive Care and Intensive Care units at Samaritan Medical Center.

Samaritan Auxiliary is a 501(c)3 organization governed by a Board of Directors consisting of volunteers that continue the mission established in 1896. In its 128th year of service of raising money to purchase capital equipment, in addition fulfilling smaller requests through its continuous fundraising ventures, such as, the Auxiliary Gift Shops, Coffee Shop, as well as the Uniform and Purse sales throughout the year, additional needs are met through

an application process to the Auxiliary Board each year. Some of the recent requests fulfilled were stuffed animals to children receiving care at Samaritan, coloring books, crayons, puzzles for patients, Watertown Daily Times newspaper subscriptions for patient use, Nee Doh Balls for that benefited the patients in the Inpatient Mental Health Unit and Acute Rehab Unit providing stress relief and help with motor skills, to name a few.

Over the course of the 128 years of the Auxiliary volunteers' hard work and dedication, many millions of dollars have been given to Samaritan to enhance patient care and this continues today. The volunteers that work in the Samaritan Medical Center and Samaritan Summit Village gift shops provide many hours of dedicated service to help us achieve these goals.

The Auxiliary is always looking for new volunteers and welcome all who would like to share in their commitment of support to Samaritan Health. If interested in volunteering in the gift shops, please reach out to Amanda Bradbury, Manager of Volunteer Services at (315) 785-4479. Another way to support Samaritan Auxiliary is by becoming an Auxiliary member through dues. If you are interested in becoming an Auxiliary member or to make a donation, please consider an annual regular membership at \$15, a senior membership at \$5, or Lifetime Member status with a \$200 donation online at Samaritan Auxiliary, or by mailing a check to Samaritan Auxiliary, Attn: Membership Chair, 830 Washington St., Watertown, NY 13601.

Beaver Camp prepared for another eventful summer

For generations, Beaver Camp has been providing youth with some of the finest experiences of summer, and adults many opportunities to retreat from life's worries on Beaver Lake in the Adirondacks.

Beaver Camp delivers enriching, fun-filled, spiritually-focused summer camps for kids, with swimming, boating, nature instruction and the ropes course that will get you climbing! Beaver Camp offers year-round programming and facilities for youth and adults, including winter camps, and the perfect place to book your group's retreat or event.

Wilderness adventure camps and other specialty camps for youth are also offered at Beaver Camp.

The camp's mission is to provide facilities and programs, infused with God's love, in which people of every age are invited to establish and grow in their relationships with Jesus Christ, through teaching and positive role models.

Countless people leave camp each year feeling refreshed, and energized by a fresh, life-changing faith decision. Beaver Camp is a place to grow, where positive friendships, and lasting faith decisions are made.

Beaver Camp is the



DBA of Adirondack Mennonite Camping Association, which is a group of approximately 198 members, governed by a Board of Directors. Upcoming events The annual Beaver Camp Auction at the Lewis County Fairgrounds is June 7-8.

Beaver Camp summer camps begin this year on June 30 and run for seven weeks. Prices vary

based on camp and the length of the camp.

Women's scrapbook and craft retreats, a women's retreat, a church leadership weekend, a parenting weekend, a grandparent and grandchild camp, winter and fall family retreats, and a young adult weekend are also offered throughout the year.

New this year is an Eclipse Event and a

Marriage Retreat.

We want to hear from you! If you have any questions about Beaver Camp, please contact Mike Judd, Director at 315-376-2640 or by emailing office@beavercamp.org. You can also visit their website at www.beavercamp.org.

Collins, Hasseler & Simser Law, PLLC, and Lawrence D. Hasseler, Attorney At Law consolidate, assisting the Carthage community with all its legal needs.

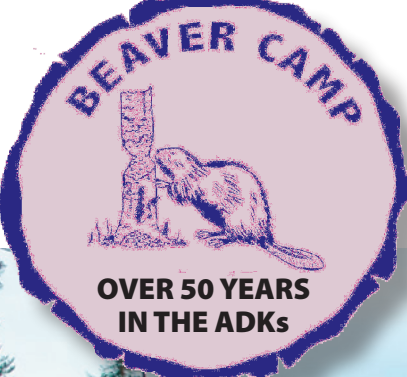
We are pleased to announce that as of January 1, 2024, the Law Offices of Lawrence D. Hasseler were consolidated into Collins, Hasseler & Simser Law, PLLC. Attorney Hasseler's telephone number and address remain: (315) 519-1113; 225 State Street, Carthage, New York 13619.

The firm's three attorneys work to serve a wide array of the community's legal needs. Attorney Rebecca Simser focuses her practice on workers' compensation and personal injury (including slip and falls, motor vehicle accidents, and construction site injuries) and social security disability, while also serving as court appointed "attorney for the child" in family law matters. Attorney Larry Hasseler assists clients with real estate transfers, estate planning, social security disability, and various litigation matters in addition to representing municipal clients. Attorney Torie Collins

concentrates her practice in the areas of trusts and estates (including advance Medicaid/nursing home planning), estate administration and probate, and real estate.

Paralegals Kirsten Lyndaker and Tara Slate compliment the firm with their friendly, knowledgeable, and accessible support, with Kirsten specializing in real estate matters and Tara specializing in social security disability and probate matters.

Holding firm to the motto "our family helping your family", the capable and approachable attorneys of Collins, Hasseler & Simser Law, have over 75 years of combined legal experience working in and around the North Country. Located in the former E.C. Crooks building at 225 State Street in the heart of Carthage, NY. Visit www.carthagelaw.com to learn more or call today to schedule an appointment at (315) 519-1113.



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CPA — Certified Public Accountant is a credential earned by accountants that allows them to audit public US companies and prepare audited financial statements for a company.

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Managing Director, Partner

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35 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



PJ Banazek

Managing Director, Partner

CREDENTIALS:
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Certified Financial Planner (CFP®)

Forbes Best-In-State Wealth Advisors* 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 (NY)

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



John Johnson

Director of Wealth Management, Partner

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Masters in Business Administration (MBA)



Nico Morgia

Financial Advisor, Financial Planning Associate

CREDENTIALS:
Certified Financial Planner (CFP®)

Forbes Next-Gen Wealth Advisors⁹ 2022, 2023 (NY)



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PROGRESS

PATH TO SUCCESS



Watertown High School. Watertown Daily Times

Watertown schools poised to become pipeline for high-tech careers

By **BRIAN KELLY**

bkelly@wdt.net

WATERTOWN — Starting this fall, students in the Watertown City School District will be given the opportunity to participate in an enhanced curriculum that signals a change in the way students are educated so they can be included in the rapidly emerging technology fields that will influence their career choices.

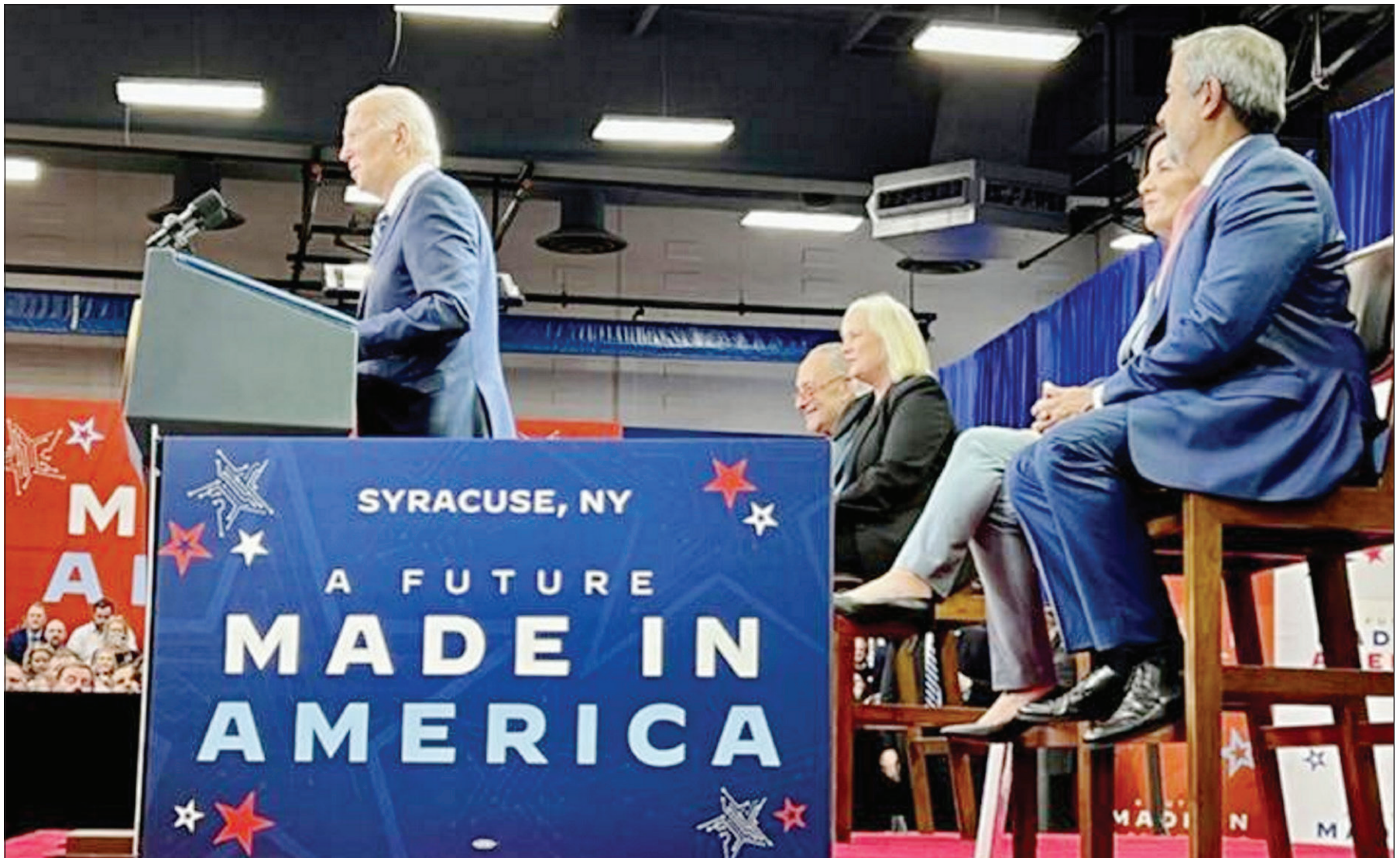
In short, as traditional manufacturing and industrial jobs decline in the area, students will be given the chance to be educated today for the higher tech jobs they can expect to be filling in the future.

In October 2022, President Joseph R. Biden came to Syracuse to herald the recently announced decision by Micron, the leading semiconductor manufacturer, to locate a computer chip manufacturing plant in Clay, about an hour's drive from Watertown.

The company has vowed to invest \$100 billion in Central New York, creating thousands of direct jobs with Micron and a spillover effect that is expected to produce thousands of more jobs across the region. Officials have said they anticipate the Micron investment will bring jobs and investment to the corridor of Central New York from Watertown to Binghamton and Albany to the Finger Lakes.

"One of the most significant investments in American history is going to ensure that the future is made in America," President Biden told a gymnasium of people on the Onondaga Community College on that October afternoon.

Micron projects that it will invest \$20 billion in the coming years to build its first



President Joseph R. Biden highlights details of Micron's promised \$100 billion investment in a microchip plant in Clay during a visit to Onondaga Community College in October. Dennis Nett/syracuse.com

plant, which it estimates will require about 5,000 construction workers and will initially employ about 3,000 manufacturing workers with an average salary of \$100,000. The company says construction on the first plant is slated to start this year.

Over about the next 20 years, the megafab plant — which will be largest semiconductor fabrication facility in the United States — will create nearly 50,000 jobs, with 9,000 Micron employees and an estimated 40,000 "community" jobs, including

suppliers, contractors and other positions supporting the operations, which Micron touts as the largest private investment ever made in the state.

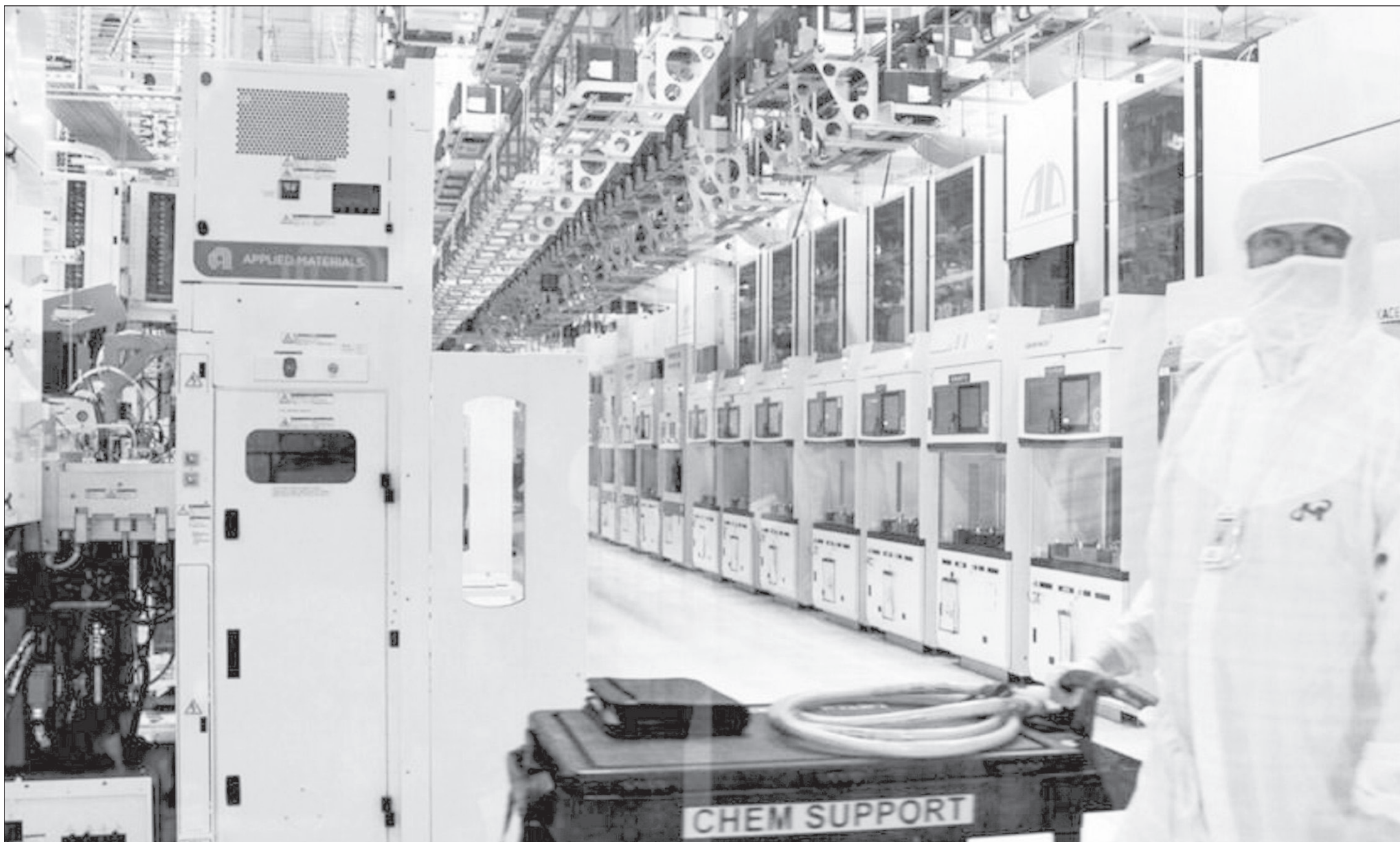
Such a large growth in the employment market over a relatively short time span begs the question of where all the workers will come from. Micron has considered this, which is where schools such as Watertown become part of the equation. The company says it will initiate partnerships with local K-12 education systems, community

colleges and institutions for top engineering and technical talent.

In early December, Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul, flanked by representatives of the American Federation of Teachers, New York State United Teachers, United Federation of Teachers and Micron, attended the groundbreaking for the Syracuse Science, Technology, Arts and Math High School, which will be Central New York's first regional technical high school, which included a \$10 million



From left, Michael Mulgrew, president of the United Federation of Teachers, Melinda Person, president of New York State United Teachers, and Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, at the Dec. 7 announcement that 10 school districts, including Watertown, have been selected to participate in the New York Advanced Technology Framework pilot program done in conjunction with Micron. Photo courtesy of Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul's office.



A Micron Technology Inc. employee moves through a clean room on the Idaho-based memory-chip maker's Southeast Boise campus on Sept. 12. Micron plans to create 50,000 jobs statewide, including 9,000 in Central New York, over the next two decades for its complex in Clay, near Syracuse. Darin Oswald/The Idaho Statesman/Tribune News Service

Success

From D1

contribution from Micron as part of its emphasis on K-12 STEM programming.

"Through the investments we're making in Central New York, we're expanding educational opportunities for students while ensuring the region is ready to welcome the jobs and opportunity coming through Micron's transformative project," Governor Hochul said at the time. "By investing in high-tech education and advanced manufacturing, we can ensure the next generation of New Yorkers is prepared to fill the jobs of the future. We're committed to building a global

chip-making hub right here in New York."

During the groundbreaking ceremony, the governor also announced that Watertown has been selected as one of 11 districts or BOCES statewide to participate in a \$4 million pilot program — New York Advanced Technology Framework — aimed at developing students for careers in the semiconductor industry.

According to the American Federation of Teachers, the framework integrates industry-based career exploration and will engage students in deeper learning, such as analyzing information, thinking critically and applying knowledge, while providing students with real-life,

real-world skills.

"Genuine learning looks different today than it did 10, or even five, years ago," NYSUT President Melinda Person said at the announcement. "Kids don't need to sit down and memorize more facts for a test. They need to know how to think critically about the unlimited information at their fingertips. They need to understand how to work and play and collaborate creatively with their peers. They need training with the complex systems and equipment that they will encounter every day in the real world."

The framework, which is being developed by state educators and NYSUT members in partnership with Micron,

will allow districts to build their own Career and Technical Education curriculum, tailored to each district's individual needs and in collaboration with the employers who are ready to hire their students, according to NYSUT.

"It won't look the same everywhere and that's the beauty of these programs — they can be tailored to schools and students' specific needs," Person said.

Watertown School Superintendent Dr. Larry C. Schmiegel said students will be eligible to sign up or opt in for Micron elective courses starting in their sophomore year. It is the intention that they will remain in the program through their senior

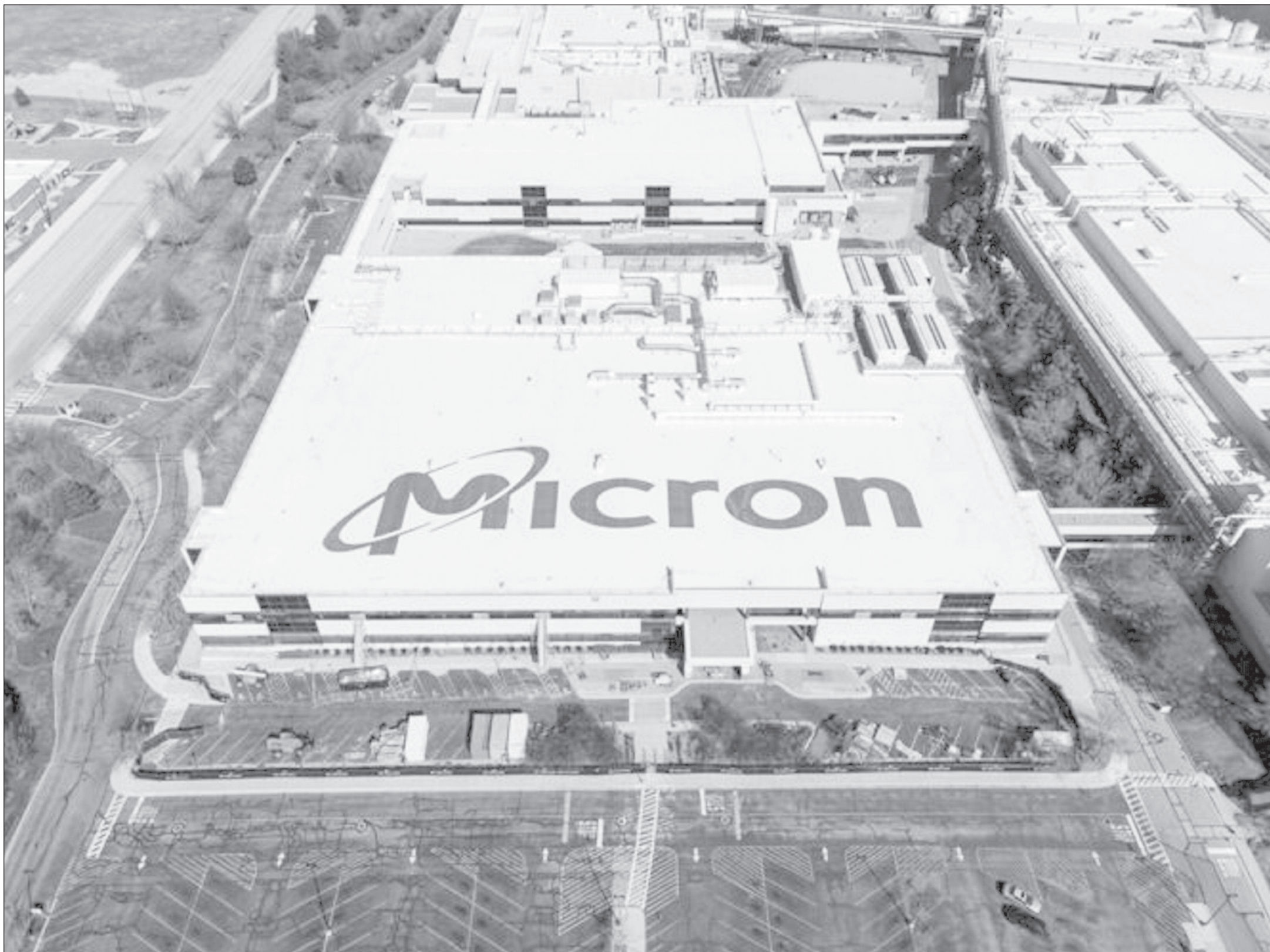
year.

"The Watertown City School District was selected as one of the 11 school districts and BOCES to host the Micron program due to our robust partnership with both local and state-level NYSUT," Schmiegel said. "NYSUT is actively collaborating with Micron to develop hands-on, engaging curriculum. They will play a crucial role as our teachers participate in their summer institute and as we continue to enhance the program throughout the three-year pilot."

The American Federation of Teachers said after the pilot phase is completed, the goal is to scale the Advanced Technology Framework across the state to increase the pipeline

of students interested in the semiconductor industry and to continue to expand workforce development.

"From Syracuse to Niagara Falls and Watertown to NYC, Micron's new initiative to invest in our youth will help students get the skills and knowledge they need to start careers in science and engineering in Upstate NY," Sen. Charles E. Schumer, R-N.Y., said in a statement. "I am proud to support Micron's commitment to fostering innovation, creating jobs, and securing a prosperous future for the next generation of New Yorkers — ensuring they are well-prepared to seize the opportunities emerging from Upstate NY's booming technology manufacturing industry."



Micron Technology headquarters in Boise, Idaho. Jeremy Erickson/Bloomberg

Hefferon Real Estate celebrates several milestones in 2024

2024 is starting off with the same pattern as in recent years: Low inventory and multiple offer situations in some cases. This is resulting in full price and over list price offers. In 2023, many listings did not last long and selling prices were still above average. Rising interest rates haven't deterred people from buying. Lenders and buyers have learned to get creative with financing. Buyers can buy points that give them a lower interest rate. This option hasn't been used in many years because of record low interest rates but it does work if you have a little extra money to work with. Over the life of a loan, one can save thousands with a very good interest rate.

The local real estate market in 2023 did show a drop of 17.8% in closings. The

average sales price continues to rise in 2024 with a 12% increase in January. The number of new listings in 2023 dropped by 10% which meant lower inventory resulting in potential bidding wars in some situations. January 2024 had a slight increase in new listings of 3.5%. Hefferon Real Estate reports that some listings were sold within 1-3 days after hitting the market and that is holding true for January 2024 statistics. Good news for sellers is that houses sold in 2023 from 95 to 98% of the listing price. In January 2024, sellers received 96.9% of their list price.

Because of the pandemic, Hefferon Real Estate learned to operate under extreme conditions including showing houses via virtual tours, Facetime and videos as well

as completing most transactions online rather than in person. Operating remotely and handling more of the typical real estate transactions online, Hefferon Real Estate has the technical skills to meet the changing needs of the public. More people than ever before have jobs that allow them to work from home, which is allowing buyers to look for properties with room for a home office in more rural settings. People working remotely from outside Jefferson County have relocated to the area, since they can choose where to live while working from home. People continue to live here even when they retire from Fort Drum and some return to Jefferson County because of available jobs and the quality of life. Hefferon Real Estate stands ready to assist buyers

and sellers. Because of low inventory in some areas, this is the perfect opportunity for property owners to seriously consider selling.

2024 brings some major milestones for Hefferon Real Estate. It is the 40th anniversary of the founding of Hefferon Real Estate and it continues to be one of the oldest independently-owned real estate firms in Jefferson County. Another milestone this year is that NYS Licensed Broker and Owner, Lisa L'Huillier Ruggiero will celebrate 25 years of ownership. Ms. L'Huillier (who uses her maiden name for her business) will also celebrate 34 years in the local real estate industry. You can contact Lisa L'Huillier at 315-783-2188 or email her at lisal@nnymls.com

Care in the Home – For All Ages

Jefferson County Public Health Home Care provides a wide range of professional and paraprofessional health care services to residents in their home throughout Jefferson County. Multiple in-home services include nursing, home health aides, physical therapy, occupational therapy, medical social worker, and case management. Twenty-Four hour on-call nurses to address patient issues, referrals and provide guidance are also available.

For the third year in a row the Jefferson County Public Health Home Care has been presented the Patient Satisfaction Award of Distinction. Congratulations to the Home Care staff! This award is presented to home health organizations that have demonstrated superior performance! Based on a comparative analysis of agencies involved in WellSky's Home Health CAHPS system, the results for the Overall

Satisfaction or Likelihood of Recommending survey questions placed JCPHS Home Care in the top 25% of WellSky's National Home Health CAHPS database.

As a Certified Home Health Agency (CHHA) they offer expert teams that address healthcare needs of all ages and sex, including: Elder Care, Mom and Baby Care, Breathing Disorders (COPD, Pneumonia, Asthma), Heart Diseases (Congestive Heart Failure), Surgical Care, Diabetes, and Stroke. "I think most people associate us with home care for the elderly. What many people do not fully understand is the wide range of services that our home care services can help with. For example, we have a thriving Mom and Baby Care program where we go into the home and help before the birth and after the birth to bring guidance and support for the health of your baby and your family. We also have an extensive in-home

rehab program for after surgery."

"The other situation we run into all of the time is explaining to the patients and the families that they have a CHOICE of who they choose for a home health care provider. Sure, there are other providers, but we want people to know it is their choice as to who they would like take care of their loved one or themselves, no matter where they are currently receiving care, or what the situation. And we would like them to consider our services."

The agency currently offers

nursing, homemaker home health aide service, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, medical social worker, nutrition and contracts for the services of respiratory and speech therapy. These services are provided throughout Jefferson County through its three programs: Certified Home Health Agency, Long Term Home Health Care Program and the Preventive Services Program.

For more information on Jefferson County Home Health Care visit www.jeffersoncountyhomecare.org or call 315-786-3770.



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Small hydroponic farm in Lyons Falls



Kristin Cunningham, owner of HumbleBee Farms in Lyons Falls, harvests beet greens inside her Freight Farm. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

By ZACHARY CANAPERI

zcanaperi@wdt.net

Originally published Nov. 25, 2023

LYONS FALLS — Hidden away in the back of a Center Street parking lot, by a steep bank that falls into the Black River, is a 40-by-8-by-10-foot white metal box that looks like a standard shipping container.

Break its airtight seal by unlatching and swinging open the heavy doors to find HumbleBee Farms - an indoor, controlled-environment hydroponic farm.

Thousands of green vegetables protrude from the side of grow frames, which are movable walls that the grower shifts around creating access hallways to different rows of plants. The drab paint on the outside is replaced by raw stainless steel all around. Sound is dampened, and the only noise left is the quiet hum of technology, and Vivaldi, playing softly from a speaker.

Kristin Cunningham, owner of HumbleBee Farms, said that classical music and high frequency tones make the plants grow faster and taste better, and that studies have shown this to be true. She also believes that the personal attention and care she puts into the plants is reflected in their flavor.

"This is food that is going into other people's bodies, so I'm extremely adamant that if I'm not feeling good or I'm grouchy, I won't seed, I won't transplant, I won't harvest. I feel that everything holds energy, and if I'm just in an awful mood, this food will carry that," she said.

Brandon Cunningham, co-founder of HumbleBee and Kristin's husband, said that when they compare the growth rates of their vegetables with data provided by Cornell University, the time it takes them to go from seed to harvest is about five days quicker than the average growers.

"It's all the attention and the music and how dedicated we are to making sure everything we are doing here is perfectly tuned for the plants," he said.

The Cunninghams purchased their entire system, ready to operate, from a Massachusetts company called Freight Farms. It is a hydroponic system, meaning that plants are grown with a water-based nutrient solution rather than soil. The mineral-rich water is circulated through a sponge-like medium attached to the grow panels. This material is also where the roots embed themselves.

According to the Cunninghams, their system has the capacity to grow 11,000 plants at once and produce the same yield as a traditional 3-acre farm. For energy, they use 190 kilowatt-hours per day, which costs about \$20.

The LED lights, which are on 18 hours



Kristin and Brandon Cunningham from HumbleBee Farms, a woman owned and veteran operated indoor farming operation in Lyons Falls. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

a day, are the only heat source needed for the container all winter. Notoriously water efficient, the Freight Farm only uses about 5 gallons of water each week. They can control the climate and lighting remotely on their smartphones and keep an eye on the crops by way of the container's six video cameras.

The Cunninghams' operation provides a stark contrast to the industrial farms that supply most grocery stores. For example, everything produced by the Freight Farm is harvested and sold to locals all in the same day, while mass-produced vegetables are shipped across the continent, over the course of several days.

For some, there is also a notable difference in the quality of the produce.

Kathy Gillett, who stopped by HumbleBee farms last Thursday afternoon to pick up some lettuce, said that she prefers buying indoor grown because "it stays fresh for three weeks," unlike the bags in the grocery store, that wilt shortly after purchasing.

Neil Mattson, a professor at Cornell University's School of Integrative Plant Science, said that the losses that vegetables sustain during transport go beyond taste and texture.

"Americans get most of our leafy greens from California and then some from Arizona, which account for around 95% of the leafy greens that we eat - coming from about 3,000 miles away. It takes them then about four to six days to get here, plus adding on additional time for distribution," he said.

This can result in produce that is less healthy than locally grown food.

"There's an opportunity for nutritional

compounds to be lost," he said.

Mattson said that indoor farms are often pesticide-free - a label that HumbleBee Farms can sport, because the Cunninghams can deal with pests and disease by controlling variables like humidity and temperature, instead of spraying potentially harmful chemicals.

The Cunninghams, who are originally from San Diego, were able to see firsthand the large farms that supply much of the produce for north country grocery stores. For years, they had an interest in alternative ways of agriculture, like aquaponics and hydroponics, so they began growing microgreens. Then, after visiting upstate New York, they decided it would be a good location for them to take their hobby to another level.

They moved to Lowville in September 2021, and opened HumbleBee farms in May this year.

"This is somewhat of a food desert out here, so (opening) was important to us, because we think that eating healthy is a right, and not a luxury," Kristin said. "We really wanted to be able to provide our community with fresh organic vegetables, 365 days a year."

Now, only seven months later, they said they are filling about 20 orders a week. Customers order online and pick up on Thursdays at the farm from 10 a.m. to noon, and at the Lewis County Fairgrounds from 3:30 to 6 p.m.

Cunningham said they are excited that their business is growing, and they will soon be opening a storefront at the old train depot in Lyons Falls. They would like to begin catering to schools, restaurants and small family-owned markets.

While the benefits of having a

year-round supply of fresh, pesticide-free produce are many, this form of agriculture appears vastly different to what people traditionally think of as farming in the north country. When people see vegetables growing sideways out of walls without any soil, it can certainly raise questions.

Mattson said that more research is needed to fully understand the differences between vegetables produced in soil, and those grown hydroponically.

Cornell University has begun this type of research, and Mattson carried out a study funded by the National Science Foundation that investigated different aspects of urban, controlled agriculture.

Mattson said one of the questions in the study was: How would nutrition of kale compare growing in a field versus growing hydroponically in a greenhouse, or indoors?

To answer this question, the researchers tracked many human nutritional compounds found in plants, with an emphasis on carotenoids, which are eye health pigments.

"We had three varieties of kale, growing them simultaneously in a field, in a greenhouse, and indoors, and then harvested them at three different stages, and analyzed them for carotenoids. We found that the indoor kale was always as nutritious as field grown - and sometimes it was actually more nutritious," Mattson said.

The artificial LED lighting used by hydroponic growers may have a part to play in the results.

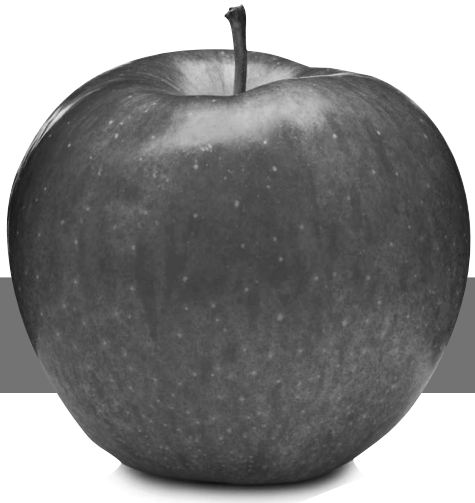
"One of our hypotheses is that the indoor kale is high in blue light, which is triggering the plant to make more of these carotenoids as phytoprotective compounds - kind of like sunscreen for the plant - to help protect them, and it turns out to be a human nutritional compound, too," Mattson said.

"That was just one study, and there are many nutritional components. I have been looking for more studies in the area and I think there is a need for more research," he added.

Although there is more to be learned, Mattson said that overall, this way of farming is something people can look forward to, especially if it means that more people are eating vegetables.

"It seems at this point the differences are pretty subtle. The best thing we can do is just get Americans just to eat more vegetables. So, if you have a flavorful vegetable," he said, "you'll eat more of it."

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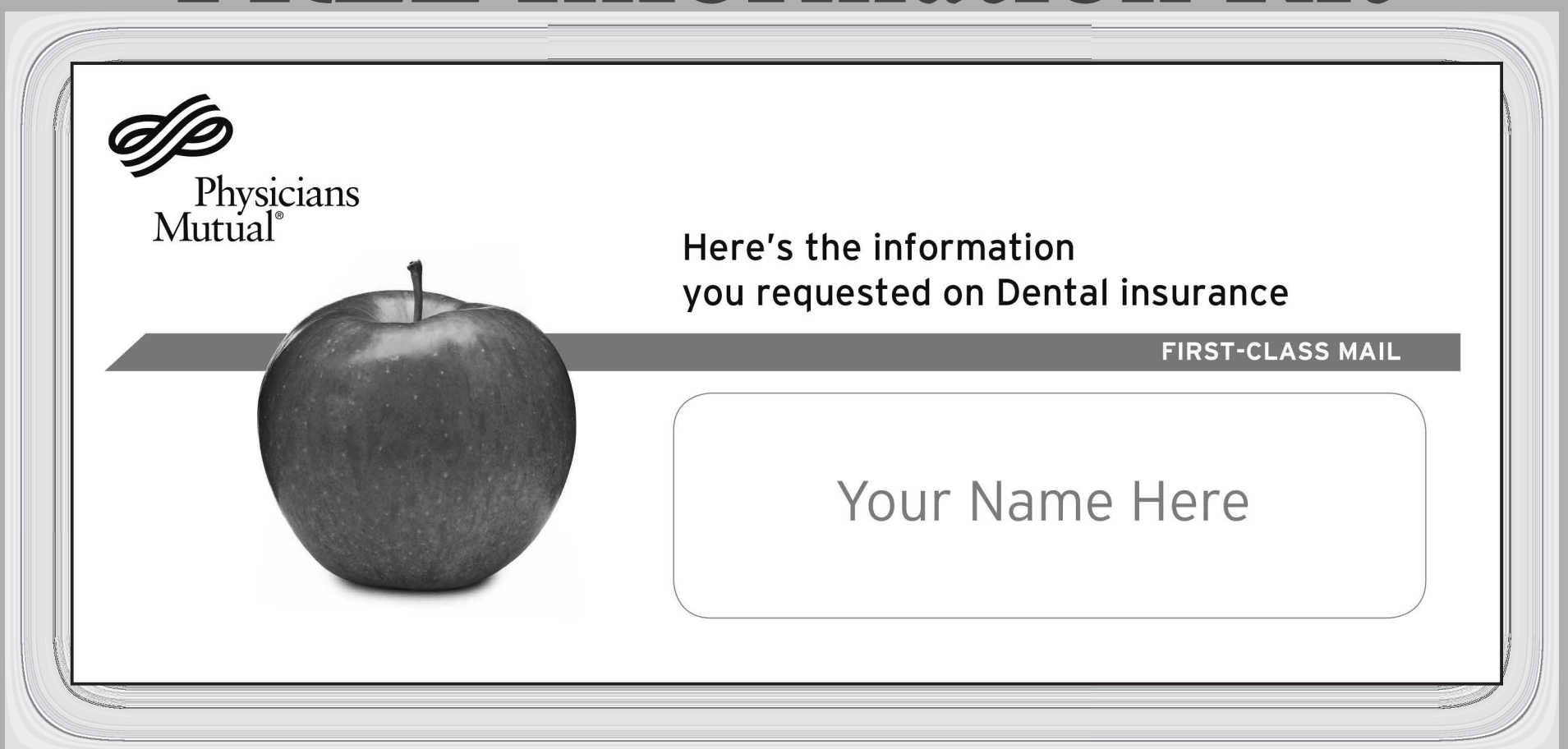
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The tradition continues for Freeman's Taffy

The Freeman Family is ready to begin its 129th year of making their delicious taffy products.

The taffy stand at the top of the hill at the Lewis County Fairgrounds was originally owned and operated by Charlie and Minnie Ryan.

They also operated the Green Gate Fine Candy Store on State Street. The Ryan's built the taffy stand at its present location in 1895, and that original structure is still utilized today.

Family stories recall that they started out only making only four flavors of taffy a far cry from their 21-flavor selection today.

Mr. and Mrs. Ryan died in the 1950s, as did Clarence Ryan. Clarence's brother-in-law, Lester Freeman and his wife Nora then took over the operation of the taffy business. They were later joined by Betty, Beryl and his wife Cornelia (Tip).

In 1976, their son, Jim and his wife Christine took control of the stand. Their children and grandchildren grew up learning the trade and help to this day.

Although the operation has changed hands through the generations, the actual process of taffy making has changed very little. The candy is still made on the same coal stove, although it has been converted to gas. The candy still gets cooled on white hard marbles and then hand-cut as it was done in 1895. While the taffy used to be hand pulled, it is now machine pulled. The old hook hangs on site as a reminder of days gone by. The recipe has also remained intact, using only sugar, water, flavors and coloring.

You can buy a stick or kisses at the original stand on top of the hill, still made the old way...



Hannah Freeman, Scott Freeman, Lori Freeman, Carli Freeman, Chris Freeman, Heather Reed, Kyla Reed, John Reed, Cole Reed, Ryan Reed, Teresa Freeman and Shawn Freeman.

As Beryl once stated, "with a lot of love and sweetness and a drop of water from heaven."

One special flavor of kiss is a regionally favorite as it contains pure Lewis County Maple Syrup.

The layout of the fair has changed over the years, and, to spare some fairgoers the walk up the hill, the Freemans have added a second location next to the Information Booth. You will still want to head up the hill to see where the taffy was made and maybe grab a fresh sample, but our trailer also offers; snocones, nachos, popcorn and lemonade.

Even though the taffy tradition centers around the week of the Lewis County Fair, their Pure Maple Taffy Kisses are also available at various north

country businesses. These kisses can be found at Lowville Producer's Cheese Store, Miller's Meat Market, The Farmhouse Boutique, Thousands Islands River Rat Cheese Store, Burrville Cider Mill, Massey Ranch, Colwell's Farm Market and Brantingham Station. In addition to the Cream Cheese Festival, The Freeman's Taffy and Treats concession trailer has expanded to include Lewis County Food Truck Friday events. We would like to thank these businesses for carrying our products and allowing us to continue the tradition.

Sadly, Jim passed away on October 8, 2020. Although he, along with his expertise is missed; his wife Chris along with their children Heather and John Reed, Scott and Lori Freeman, Shawn and Teresa

Freeman and five grandchildren Ryan, Cole and Kyla Reed, Hannah and Carli Freeman are carrying on this long-standing tradition.

129 years of a family tradition is something the Freeman Family is extremely proud of and wishes to thank the community who has played a large part in supporting this tradition.

SLC IDA following its mission

The mission of the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency ("IDA") is to promote, encourage, attract, and develop job opportunities and economically sound commerce and industry in St. Lawrence County. Outreach efforts involve direct calls, site visits, advertisements, trade-show participation, and a variety of business-to-business sponsored activities such as Business Resource Mixers, and other cosponsored events with the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce.

As an example, in 2023 business connection activities included tours of the SUNY Canton Canino School of Engineering as well as events at the three BOCES Tech Centers. The IDA sponsors and participates in these events to connect businesses with skilled workers to help both the employers and local job seekers.

The IDA and New York Power Authority hosted the business-to-business "Center for

Entrepreneurial Leadership" networking and business development program, a spin off from a program initiated at the University of Buffalo. SUNY Canton is the local sponsor for this affiliation. Seven small business leaders from throughout the county completed the 20-week session in June 2023.

In 2022, the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators allocated American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA") funds in the amount of \$3,387,000 to be administered by the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency to assist businesses, organizations, and individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic through several program categories. As of the end of 2023, over \$2.2 million has been awarded throughout St. Lawrence County through these programs.

Building on the success of the CDL-A training program at the SUNY Canton

See IDA D8

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Massena Green Hydrogen Project



Together with donors, Community Foundation partners to improve quality of life across the north country

The Northern New York Community Foundation partners with families, individuals, businesses, and organizations across Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence County to support a variety of charitable interests.

Since 1929, the Community Foundation has worked to make the region a better place to live, work, and play — for all. Its commitment to donors helps them achieve their charitable objectives now and for generations to come by preserving and honoring legacies

of community philanthropy. The Foundation is also a resource for local charitable organizations, donors, professional advisors, and nonprofits.

The Foundation's mission — to inspire and celebrate giving, steward resources honorably, and foster vibrant North Country communities — has evolved to serve the Northern New York region. Its guiding values shape the work it does in partnership with donors to improve quality of life in communities across our region: Inspire



Northern New York Community Foundation

Philanthropy. Develop Relationships. Act Respectfully. Honor Stewardship.

While much has changed through the Foundation's 95-year history, one constant remains: the spirit of local philanthropy that so moved civic leaders to organize a community foundation is stronger than ever.

Throughout 2023, the Community Foundation, along with many donors, responded to emerging needs across the region. In partnership with those who love Northern New York, the Foundation continues to address the critical and essential needs of our neighbors.

Community foundations work with charitably inclined individuals,

families, organizations, and businesses to support quality-of-life programs, projects, and services that improve the region. Anyone may decide to establish a charitable fund at the Community Foundation to support a cause, a

geographic area, or organization about which they are passionate. These can be scholarships to specific schools to support education, a fund to support a nonprofit agency in perpetuity, or a

See COMMUNITY D8

Roggie's Flooring thanks the community

On behalf of everyone at Roggie's Flooring Center, we would like to express our gratitude to our community for your continued support. We look forward to serving you in 2024 and beyond.

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fashionable, affordable flooring such as carpet, ceramic tile, hardwood, laminate, and sheet vinyl. At Roggie's Flooring Center, a proud member of the Flooring Network, we've got you covered.

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Browse our website at roggiesflooring.com to learn more and then come talk to us by calling 315-376-8166 or stop by our showroom at 5809 Number 4 Road, Lowville, NY. We look forward to serving you.

SeaComm remains focused while celebrating 60 years

MASSENA — As SeaComm completes its 60th year of service, the focus remains to optimize the financial well-being of its members while contributing to the communities in which it serves. In this respect, 2023 was a significant year for continued success. "The heart of why we exist comes from us serving and improving the overall financial lives of our membership," says Scott A. Wilson, President and Chief Executive Officer. "We are committed to being there, when our members need us most."

Throughout the year, SeaComm continued to concentrate on strengthening its current offerings to improve member experience. Several improvements and upgrades were made to the mobile app, SeaComm's audio response system (SMARTLine) and its eZCard alert system. "Our focus continues to be on enhancing our product and service offerings to meet the needs of our membership," said Wilson. SeaComm continues to provide its members with access to additional services, including the Loan Engine pre-approval program, free online bill pay, and Benefits Plus® checking, which provides members with discounts and saving in retail and travel, as well as offering identity theft protection and much more.

SeaComm's Pay-It-Forward Program carried out random acts of kindness, impacting over 4,800 individuals. Delivery of floral arrangements and puzzles to nursing home residents; surprising restaurant patrons with free breakfast; paying for orders at local coffee shops and purchasing school supplies for students in need, are just a few of the events fulfilled. For its community engagement, SeaComm was awarded the 2023 Silver MAC Award from the Marketing Association of Credit Unions, the Diamond Award from CUNA Marketing and Business Development Council, and the First Place Dora Maxwell Award for Social Responsibility.

support the service communities, SeaComm staff members participated in the "Do Some Good" Program, which allows them to volunteer for a charity or cause of their choice during work hours. Some of the local charities selected were Hospice of the North Country, United Way of Northern New York and Helping Hands of Potsdam. During the year, more than \$428,000 in donations and sponsorships were given, including donations to the foundations of Samaritan Medical Center and St. Lawrence Health; The Malone Recreation Foundation; Hospice of St. Lawrence Valley; Veteran's Memorial Park in

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Shown in the final months of turbine construction, Number Three Wind, a renewable energy project developed by Chicago-based Invenergy, is now adding electricity to the grid. The official launch ceremony was held on Thursday morning. Julie Abbass/Watertown Daily Times

Invenergy wind farm starts today

Number 3 project in Lowville, Harrisburg may serve 30,000 households

By JULIE ABBASS

Originally published May 4, 2023

LOWVILLE — The official launch of Invenergy's Number Three wind project today marks the addition of up to 103.9 megawatts of electricity to the grid.

The company estimates that the 27 turbines and two substations constructed in the towns of Harrisburg and Lowville over the past two years will potentially serve electricity to about 30,000 households around the state.

The launch is also the first time the wind project's status as one of the more than 20 renewable energy projects considered part of the \$11 billion Clean Path NY project has been made public.

The Clean Path NY project is a collaboration between the state Power Authority, Chicago-based Invenergy and New

York City-based energyRe that will build 175 miles of transmission line from Delaware County in the Catskills bordering northern New Jersey to New York City to be ready for use in 2027.

Invenergy Vice President Marguerite Wells, who has been working to develop Number Three since 2016, said that there will not be any direct power lines built from Number Three to the new energy super-highway.

She said the existing lines cannot support the influx of power so the electricity currently created that is not used locally ends up traveling to other states.

"The idea is trying to connect New York City better to the rest of the state's grid so that when there is extra renewable energy upstate, it can be sent to the city," she explained. "By increasing the

connections upstate to downstate we prevent the city from having to (use their) fossil fuel peaker plants that turn on whenever the city needs more energy than it can get."

Speakers at the event included executives from Invenergy, the Power Authority, the Clean Path project, the state Energy Research and Development Authority and local officials.

Invenergy says Number Three has been a \$220 million investment that will bring more than \$1 million in agreed-upon payments instead of property taxes, commonly referred to as PILOTs to both towns, Lowville and Copenhagen school districts, the county and is the first contributor to the Economic Development Fund established by the county Industrial Development Corporation and Naturally Lewis.

In a previous interview, Ms. Wells said that Invenergy will stick with the established PILOT agreements instead of opting out to use the new assessment calculations the state has put into play in the recently passed 2024 budget.

"It would definitely save us money to use the (new) tax methodology but we prefer a PILOT. It gives us certainty. It gives fixed payments over the years. It's much better for the towns because they can budget better and that's what we signed up for, so that's what we're going to do," she said last month. "I think it's also important that we make good on not only the promises we've made but on the agreements we've signed. It's executed. We're doing it."

Invenergy made its first payments to the municipalities in December 2021.

Naturally Lewis has \$930,000 in grant funds available

Provided by Naturally Lewis

Originally published Jan. 23, 2024

LOWVILLE — Naturally Lewis has a second round of funding for four grant programs totaling \$930,000. These grant funds are: (1) Small Things, Big Impacts Fund, (2) Community Connections Fund, (3) Building Business Fund and (4) Vacant Property Revitalization Fund.

The Small Things, Big Impacts Fund (\$26,000) will support smaller-scale projects that will make a big impact. The 2024 priority for this fund is visibility, including, but not limited to, signage, branding, packaging, murals/artwork, and mobile visibility.

Applications for the Small Things, Big Impacts Fund will open on Jan. 15 and close on March 28. Applications will be reviewed on a quarterly basis until all funds are dispersed.

The Community Connections Fund (\$60,000) will support municipalities, schools, and 501c3 non-profit organizations in projects that will strengthen ties within the community, to develop relationships, and to spur economic growth and development through the creation and enhancement of public gathering places or services. Applications for the Community Connections Fund will open on April 1, and close on June 13.

The Building Business Fund (\$100,000) will support local businesses providing matching funds to invest in the "tools" to scale up and grow. Funds can be used for literal tools (equipment/



machinery) or figurative tools (business services/professional services) to assist business growth. Projects must show overall benefit to the community and promote economic development through business growth. Applications for the Building Business Fund will open on July 1 and close on Sept. 26.

The Vacant Property Revitalization Fund (\$750,000) will support building owners that are looking to revitalize vacant buildings or floors into usable spaces for commercial use. Applications for the Vacant Property Revitalization Fund will open on September 30, 2024 and close on December 5, 2024.

Applications for all programs will be reviewed by the Community Economic Development Fund Committee. This committee consists of six (6) community leaders and one (1) Lewis County Development Corporation Board Member.

Find more information about the Community Economic Development Program and each of the grant opportunities at <https://naturallylewis.com/growing-opportunities/cedf>, or by following Naturally Lewis on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn at @naturallylewis.

Deck at The Arc facility revamped thanks to several groups

By Elaine M. Avallone

eavallone@lowville.com

Originally published Nov. 8, 2023

LOWVILLE — With several groups coming together for a common goal, people receiving services at the Stowe Street Day Habilitation will have place to sit outside together to play games and get some fresh air.

Heather Evans, vice president of development at The Arc Oneida-Lewis counties said during a visit to the facility, in the spring, to look into the need to replace the roof, she found the deck was in disrepair.

"I am responsible for grant writing and fundraising to accomplish these types of projects," Ms. Evans said, noting the staff shared that the 'people we support' really enjoyed this outdoor living environment.

"With the unevenness of the boards and some nails protruding, they were unable to take advantage of it," she added.

The Arc administrator reached out to Board of Cooperative Educational Services - BOCES - and to the American Legion commander for help with manpower.

C. Lee Hinkleman, commander of the Lowville American Legion, is the liaison for the partnership with Fort Drum soldiers from the 310 General Services Aviation Battalion. For a number of years, the soldiers have aided in projects around Lewis County.

Mr. Hinkleman said The Arc has had a relationship with the battalion in that the people receiving services from the agency have helped the soldiers with projects such as filling plastic eggs with candy for an Easter egg hunt.

About 10 soldiers aided in the Arc project by demolishing the original decking.

About 21 students from the



Students with Jefferson-Lewis Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), work together to construct a wrap around porch for the Arc Facility in Lowville, while a resident watches from inside. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

carpentry and building projects courses at Howard G. Sackett Technical Center in Glenfield took part in the project.

Ms. Evans said she reached out to BOCES in order to give the students, "a valuable opportunity" for "a resume-building, real-life experience."

BOCES instructor Jared Zehr said the project did that and more.

"It is fantastic," he said. "It allows the students to practice the skills they have learned academically. It gives them professional knowledge and they love being outdoors. They learn faster with hands on."

The instructor said the project also benefits the student who took pride in their work knowing it was for a non profit.

"The students have interacted

with the people here which motivated them more," Mr. Zehr said. "Helping someone else makes them work harder."

Throughout the school year, the BOCES students have worked on number of projects including building a modular fire hall for the Plessis Volunteer Fire Company Inc. and as a member of the Town Of Webb Union Free School District baseball team as well as sheds for some private individuals.

Beaver River Central School juniors Ethan Moshier and Caleb Click said they appreciated being outside working instead of being in the classroom.

Ethan, who hopes to work for a local construction crew following graduation, said it felt good to do something good for the community.

"It makes you see things from a different perspective," said Caleb, who aspires to maybe build movie sets one day. He added he would recommend BOCES course to prepare for "real life."

"It's been fun," said David Hosler, a Lowville Academy and Central School junior. "They are a good group of people and it's good to get out of the classroom."

David said BOCES has prepared him for life after school when he plans to work in construction, specially working with concrete for home construction.

BOCES instructor Cole Mullin explained the project was utilizing composite decking which requires closer support boards than wood.

"We are teaching them to do it the right way," Mr. Mullin said. "This is a great cause



Students with Jefferson-Lewis Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), work together to construct a wrap around porch for the Arc Facility in Lowville. Zachary Canaperi/Watertown Daily Times

-benefitting the community and giving these young fellows training in the process."

Mr. Zehr noted that for some of the students this was their first experience with framing for a project.

"I learned a lot about framing," said Kenneth "Duke" Snyder, a Carthage Central School junior, who aspires to be a truck driver but would fall back to his construction training and do masonry if that did not work out.

Ms. Evans was on hand for the project kick off Oct. 27.

"It was my privilege to spend the day with the conscientious, eager and hardworking students and the respectful soldiers," she said. "With the patient guidance of Mr. Zehr and Mr. Mullins, I was able to witness each one of these students actively

learning and problem solving - as a parent, exactly the experience we hope our children have in school. I cannot tell you how happy I felt leaving the job site Friday, having seen this project coming to fruition in a way that is so meaningful to all involved."

One person, who utilizes the day habilitation center, watched the workers from inside the facility.

"It's so cool," she said, noting that she couldn't wait to use the new deck.

Funding for the approximately 900 square foot wrap around deck with stairs and ramp came from Walmart with a local \$500 grant and Tops with a \$5,000 donation which covered almost all of the materials needed, according to Ms. Evans.

Proposed Lewis County budget drops tax rate to 27-year low

Staff report

Originally published Nov. 15, 2023

LOWVILLE — Lewis County legislators were presented with a budget Nov. 7 for 2024 that raises spending by about 5%, but will lower the tax rate by nearly 16%, or to the lowest rate the county has seen in almost three decades.

County Manager Ryan Piche's proposed \$62.28 million budget will include a little over \$3 million in spending above the \$59.28 million included in the 2023 budget.

The tax levy, or the amount to be raised through taxes, will drop 2.7%, from \$18.79 million this year to \$18.29 million in 2024, a \$500,000 decrease. It's the first time since 1999 that the county's tax levy has been reduced.

Along with that, the tax rate that property owners will pay will drop 15.6%, going from \$7.54 per each \$1,000 of assessed value in 2023 to \$6.37 per each \$1,000 in the coming year. That's the lowest tax rate in the county since 1996.

For a property owner with a home assessed at \$100,000, the 2024 tax rate would translate into a county tax bill of \$637, or \$117 less than the \$754 owed in 2023. For a home assessed at \$200,000, the 2024 bill would be \$1,274, or \$234 less than the \$1,508 paid in 2023, while

an assessment of \$300,000 will come with a \$1,911 tax bill, \$351 less than the \$2,262 paid this year.

The median assessed value of a home in the county is \$122,800, which would mean a median savings of \$144 for property owners. The median tax bill in 2023 was \$926, but is proposed to be \$782 in 2024.

One of the factors driving the county's ability to lower its tax rate is a 15.2%, or \$380 million, increase in its taxable property values experienced in the past year. Its total tax base increased from \$2.49 billion in 2023 to \$2.87 in 2024, while the county's full taxable value has grown about 30% in the last 10 years.

A second factor is an overall increase in revenue, which will rise nearly 10% in 2024. Revenues are projected to rise about \$3.86 million in 2024, from \$38.64 million in 2023 to \$42.49 million in 2024. The county is projecting that sales tax revenue will rise to \$19 million, although Piche is conservatively budgeting \$17.75 million, which would represent about 43% of the county's total revenue.

During the November meeting, Mr. Piche informed the legislators that the budget was now in their hands and any changes could be made by motion or resolution at the next meeting.

Jefferson, St. Lawrence sales tax revenue up; Lewis dips

Staff report

WATERTOWN — Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties saw modest gains in local government sales tax collections in 2023 compared to the previous year, while Lewis County experienced an almost negligible dip in receipts.

According to data released Feb. 5 by the state comptroller's office, Jefferson County's collections rose 2.7% in 2023 over those received in 2022, while St. Lawrence County's collections were up 0.6%. Lewis County saw a year-over-year drop of 0.7%.

For Jefferson County, 2023 receipts totaled \$103.7 million, a \$2.7 million increase over the \$101 million collected in 2022. St. Lawrence County's receipts grew by \$500,000, from \$80.29 million in 2022 to \$80.79 million this past year. Lewis County saw its collections dip by \$130,000, from \$18.33 million in 2022 to \$18.20 million in 2023.

The city of Ogdensburg's collections rose from \$1.51 million in 2022 to \$2.11 million in 2023, an increase of \$600,000, although a true year-over-year comparison is not possible because the city did not start collecting its own sales tax until March 2022.

Oswego County's receipts went up 1.6% between 2022 and 2023,

from \$61.44 million in 2022 to \$62.43 million this past year, an increase of \$990,000. The city of Oswego's collections grew by \$2.98 million, or 16%, going from \$18.71 million in 2022 to \$21.69 in 2023.

Overall, according to the comptroller's office, collections grew about 4.2% statewide, totaling \$23 billion in 2023, a \$919 million increase over 2022.

The growth in sales tax collections is now at about the same levels seen prior to the COVID-19

pandemic. In 2021 and 2022, collections grew by double-digit percentage points, as inflation brought higher prices and overall sales increased compared to the period of the pandemic, but the comptroller's office says the growth is now more consistent with that seen in the years between 2011 and 2019.

The change in gasoline prices over the past couple of years has also had a notable impact on local sales tax collections, according to the comptroller's office,

as the taxes collected on the retail sale of motor fuels comprise around 5% of local collections statewide in a given year.

Quarterly year-over-year gasoline prices declined anywhere from 3.1% to 21.4% in 2023 as sales tax growth continued to slow, whereas nearly 46% average growth in gasoline prices from the second quarter of 2021 to the third quarter of 2022 helped drive significant sales tax increases during that period.

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Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority Advances Mission of Connecting Northern New York to the World

As a self-sustaining New York State Public Benefit Corporation, the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority (OBPA) is a steward of transportation infrastructure in Northern New York. With five distinct operations ranging from port and rail facilities, to an international bridge, commerce park campus, and airport, the OBPA works to create opportunity for business to thrive. Through the undertaking of transformative projects and capital investments the OBPA is able to deliver on its mission and help improve the lives of the people it serves.

The OBPA continues to have much success in securing a diverse set of federal and state competitive grants for the improvement and expansion of its operations. Announced in Fall 2022, the OBPA was awarded from Governor Kathy Hochul the Upstate Airport Economic Development and Revitalization Grant which resulted in \$18M towards the reimagining of Ogdensburg International Airport. This innovative project, which builds upon the \$26M that has already been invested in the terminal and airfield, provides for not only the renovation and expansion of the airport terminal but also the construction of an events center complex to host public and private events and help provide a gathering space for the community. The new airport facility will be a warm welcome to travelers coming to the North Country and a point of pride for the area as well as aid in the attraction of additional air service and increased destinations.

Understanding that access to childcare in our region is a barrier for many looking to enter the workforce, the OBPA has undertaken a childcare facility project that will call the Commerce Park Campus home. With an anticipated 125 child capacity, the facility will provide services, programs, and daycare to children younger than school-age. The OBPA is proud to partner with The Arc Jefferson - St. Lawrence to operate the childcare

facility. With The Arc's extensive knowledge and expertise in providing services to children the facility will be a much-needed resource for the community, and will also provide an attractive amenity for companies looking to locate within the Commerce Park Campus. Funding for this project has been provided by, with the immense support of U.S. Senators' Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Northern Border Regional Commission, and New York State Empire State Development.

For its Port of Ogdensburg facility, the OBPA was the only New York State port successful in securing \$5.1M through the 2023 Port Infrastructure Development Program awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration. This funding will aid in expanding the port dock by approximately 450 feet and dredging a section of non-federal channel. By deepening and expanding the marine terminal facility, the OBPA is able to achieve greater levels of efficiency and economies of scale making the lone U.S. port on the St. Lawrence River more competitive.

Knowing that success is a team sport, the OBPA is greatly appreciative of its partner organizations such as its grant writer Strategic Development Specialists of Syracuse, NY, its elected officials, and community members who share in the desire to keep improving the lives of the people who call the North Country home. It is in the organizational DNA of the OBPA to never stop moving and to always be improving and expanding its infrastructure assets for the betterment of the community they serve.

To learn more about the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority please visit www.ogdensport.com or call 315-393-4080.



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